

The Framing of a Social Movement
*Actors' Perspectives on Joining, Leaving and Refraining from
Membership in the Naxalite Movement in South India*

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*Overlook the poor peasantry. Ignore the legitimate demands of labour.
Implement the neo-liberal project blindly. Naxalism is what you get.*

-Aditya Nigam

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In Memory of Lives that have been Lost and People who have
been Displaced in the Heart of India.

In a Country of One Billion, No One Notices. - **Chakma**

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Map of India with the states of Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Who are the Naxalites?

On the 14th of March 2006, the Home Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh said that the “Naxalites are the single largest national security threat in India” (News 2007). In contrast to this citation, an excerpt from a major Naxalite Blogspot does not define Naxalites as a threat to internal security, but argues rather that:

“The notion that a Naxalite is someone who hates his country is naive and usually idiotic. He is, more likely, one who likes his country more than the rest of us, and is thus more disturbed than the rest of us when he sees it debauched. He is not a bad citizen turning to crime; he is a good citizen fighting for justice and equality.”¹

The term ‘Naxalites’ refers to ‘the Naxalite movement’ which began in 1967 when the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI (ML)) organised a peasant protest against landlords in the village of Naxalbari in Darjeeling district in West-Bengal (Louis 2002:51-63). Today, several groups declare their loyalty to the Naxalbari Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. Some of these groups engage in guerrilla warfare and some participate in parliamentary elections, others combine the two strategies. Their commonality is that they believe the Indian state must be overthrown through armed struggle and that armed struggle is a precondition for a New Democratic Revolution.

Since 2004 the term ‘Maoist movement’ has been used. This term only refers to the Communist Party of India (Maoist)², which was formed through a merger between the two major Naxalite groups in India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People’s War (CPI (ML) PW)³, and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCC)⁴. The CPI (M) is currently the largest and most violent Naxalite group in India (Ramana 2008:112). According the latest intelligence

¹ Quote from a Naxalite Revolution Blogspot: <http://naxalrevolution.blogspot.com/index.html>.

² This must not be confused with the mainstream political party CPI (Marxist) which holds power in the states of West-Bengal and Kerala. For details on the formation of the CPI (Maoist), please visit: http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/CPI_M.htm

³ Commonly referred to as ‘People’s War’ or ‘People’s War Group’. For more details on the formation of this group, please visit: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/terrorist_outfits/PWG.htmhttp://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/terrorist_outfits/PWG.htm

⁴ For more information on the details of the formation of this group, please visit: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/terrorist_outfits/MCC.htm

report from the police, approximately 39 Naxalite groups are currently present in 22 out of India's 28 states, with a combined membership of more than 100,000 people, the previous year Naxalites were present in 16 states⁵ (Sinha 2008).

1.2 Context

I will consequently use the terms 'Naxalite movement' or 'Naxalite groups' to designate the groups included in this study. The Naxalite movement is seen as political social movement that aims to recruit people through the proffering of a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. The emergence of the Naxalite movement must be understood as part of a general grassroots response to the larger identity project of building a 'new modern India', which emerged in the aftermath of Independence in 1947. The movement surfaced simultaneously with other 'subaltern movements' and represented "the voices of "otherness" emanating from beyond the postcolonial development project and articulating a rejection of this project" (Corbridge and Harriss 2000:201; Nilsen 2008:1-3).

The movement has, over the last two decades, extended its verbal support to other radical social movements, like the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in Columbia, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), and New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines. It is also part of the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) (Ramana 2008:118). On the Naxal Revolution Blogspot, they also extend their sympathy with the Nationalist struggle in Northeast India, groups fighting in Jammu and Kashmir as well as local civilian protests against Multinational Companies (MNCs) and implementation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ)⁶. However their activities remain nationally oriented and their financial and material support base are civilians. Mohanty (2006:3167-68) argues that the government of India has understood this linking of Naxalites with other movements as a network of militants for training, supply of weapons and coordination against

⁵ See map on spread of Naxalism in appendix 3.1.

state repression, leading to an overall focus on military measures for combating Naxalite movements

Subramanian (2007:125-144) argues that Naxalites have engaged in legitimate political struggles for constitutional rights, such as land, wages, dignity and democratic rights for marginalised groups⁷ in Indian society. The government responses to such legitimate demands have been met with repression by state forces. With the formation of the CPI (M) in 2004 the official understanding of the Naxalite movement as a law and order problem has been reinforced (Group 2008:44). Nandini Sundar (2007:269) argues that the discourse on Naxalism in India has been constructed around what she terms ‘moral panic’. Sundar (2007:270) argues that what is at stake is “the government’s image of being firm and taking action; action which may have no direct relevance of efficiency in tackling the problem at hand”. The author argues that the construction of the ‘Naxalite Problem’ is a reflection on the threat posed by Naxalites to the status quo. The projection of a ‘threat’ justifies often unaccountable forces and funding to combat such a threat. Sundar (2007:270) contends that in India, the task of improving governance is never implemented as seriously as security-related decisions. This is sustained by Subramanian’s (2007:143) argument that the policing of Naxalites are being done at the cost of enforcing basic rights for lower castes and tribals.

1.3 Why Naxalites?

Naxalite movements first stirred my curiosity during a study trip to India in March and April 2007. This study trip was centred on development and environmental issues and was organised by the Centre for Science and Environment (SUM) at the University of Oslo, in cooperation with the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in Delhi. The research I conducted during

⁶ These are areas selected for industrial development, meant to attract foreign investment and are exempt from taxes. For more information on SEZ, please read Menon and Nigam (2007:64-68) or visit: <http://sezindia.nic.in/>

⁷ In particular lower castes and Dalits, poor segments of Other Backward Castes, poor peasants and tribal people, in some cases financially deprived people from upper castes (Mehra 2000:54).

the trip led me to several questions about Naxalism, which was introduced mainly in relation to forest laws and tribal rights. Originally, the most puzzling was why Naxalism is not commonly known outside India and is almost absent from mainstream media in Delhi, despite widespread activities in many Indian states. However, there was another more basic question which became the foundation of my research question; namely, how the movement is able to unite different groups of people cutting across caste, ethnicity, class and gender over time.

1.4 Research Question and Design

Naxalites see themselves as people fighting for justice and equality, but why do they engage in such a struggle? And why do others choose not to become ‘good citizens’ and fight for Naxalite ideals? These fundamental issues became the basis on which I formed the research question this thesis addresses: *How do people frame their experiences of joining, leaving and refraining from membership in the Naxalite movement?*

The study is limited to one specific area in South India, which encompasses the districts of Warangal and Khammam in the state of Andhra Pradesh⁸, where I conducted the research. These districts were chosen due their accessibility in terms of contacts and relative security. I will also focus on the district of Dantewada in Chhattisgarh⁹, because the experiences of informants who refrained from joining the Naxalite movement drew their experiences from this region. The time when the research was carried out, these people were living as refugees in Warangal and Khammam.

Through an anthropological fieldwork oriented methodology, centred on the actor’s perspective, I have attempted to answer the question above. This study does not aim to uncover causal factors, but rather focuses on the narratives of joining, leaving or opting to refrain from membership. The research

⁸ See state map of Andhra Pradesh, in appendix 3.2.

necessitates an exploratory approach because analytical research focusing on micro-level issues and individual's perspectives in relation to Naxalite movements has been absent from the vast literature that exists on the topic. As will be argued in the methodology section, this movement remains largely under-theorized. By using a concept of *frame alignment process* theory developed by Snow et. al (1986), synthesized with critiques of the frame alignment concept and integrated with other relevant theories from anthropology, sociology and political science, I have developed an analytical tool to address the empirical findings of the specific context in which I conducted my research. I hope that this study not only sheds light on micro-level processes but also generates a theoretical contribution to the study of individual's interpretation of social movements' interpretive frames in a specific context.

1.5 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2.0 will provide a historical background on the origins of Naxalite movements in India in general, and Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in particular. This section will also explain the logic behind the Naxalite ideology and that of Brahmanism and Ambedkarism, which are fundamental for understanding the function of caste in relation to class struggle in India. The last part of the section will define the identities and roles of the interviewees. In chapter 3.0 the theoretical foundation of this study will be explicated. Subsequently, the methodological approaches and sources of information will be elaborated in section 4.0. Chapter 5.0 is the analysis, in which the findings are interpreted through the theoretical framework developed in section 3.0. In chapter 6.0 I will present my concluding remarks and address some of the limitations, as well as positive implications, of this study.

⁹ See state map of Chhattisgarh in appendix 3.2.

2.0 CASE BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

This section will provide the historical backdrop for the case study. The narratives of informants and their experiences of joining, leaving and staying out encompass a period from 1977 to present. Therefore it is necessary to present a chronological history of the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh and include the history of their expansion into Chhattisgarh. Informants who refrained from membership in the Naxalite movement draw their experiences from the current decade of Naxalite activities in the latter state. Experiences of interviewees who joined and left the movement are rooted in the context of Andhra Pradesh. The first section will address the current situation of Naxalism in India. The following sections depict the origins and chronology of the movement, with particular attention to the groups informants were part of; the CPI (ML) PW, CPI (ML) Janashakti and CPI (M). The last parts will address the socio-cultural backgrounds of informants in this study, and the Brahmin and Ambedkar ideologies that conflicted with Naxalite ideology.

2.2 Current Situation

In a report by Human Rights Watch, there were 950 deaths due to Maoist related violence in 2006. By November 2007, more than 550 people had died, of those two hundred civilians (HRW 2008). A report published by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) lists the states of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra and Orissa as the worst affected areas in terms of Maoist-related violence¹⁰ (SATP 2007). In 2005 the number of fatalities was higher in Andhra Pradesh than in Chhattisgarh. In 2006 this changed and in Chhattisgarh the number superseded that of Andhra Pradesh (SATP 2008; Singh 2006). This illustrates a shift in geographical location from Andhra Pradesh into Chhattisgarh.

2.3 Significance of Naxalbari

The struggle in Naxalbari was led by the CPI (ML) under the leadership of Charu Majumdar, which had broken away from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) a few years earlier (Ahuja and Ganguly 2007:257). The group shared the goals of former communist led peasant rebellions¹¹ and drew upon rhetoric of injustice, protests, tactics and strategy to articulate its resistance to the ‘oppressor’, perceived as the Government of India (Routledge 1997:2172). Banerjee (2008) argues that the Naxalbari struggle emerged in a time period marked by Marxist inspired struggles for liberation and civil rights¹², and China’s Cultural Revolution. The Naxalbari struggle was brutally repressed by state forces and by 1972 it was defeated. According to Louis (2002:60) however, the Naxalbari slogan of; “Naxalbari is the only way” has inspired peasants in India to launch similar militant and armed agrarian movements to fight the prevailing system in their own areas. It advanced the peasant struggle in the sense that it was not only focused on land, but to alter the political system as a whole by seizure of state power (Ibid.).

2.4 Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh

2.4.1 1970s and 1980s

During the Emergency Period¹³, the Naxalite movement had experienced great setback in its activities. In the post-emergency period various Naxalite groups attempted to revive and reconsolidate, through increased mobilization of the peasants by highlighting “the various issues concerning the poor and downtrodden” (Singh 2008:13). It was also a period in which the Congress-led government of Andhra Pradesh increasingly implemented policies¹⁴ that evicted tribals from their lands, and as a response Naxalite groups would side

¹⁰ The states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West-Bengal also experienced fatalities due to Naxalite presence, but in lower numbers than the previously mentioned states (SATP 2008).

¹¹ Like the Tebhaga movement in Bengal and Telangana movement of Andhra Pradesh in the 1940s and 1950s, and Srikakulam in 1969-1972. For more information on the history and implications of these movements, please read Louis, P. (2002:41-51) and Singh, P. (2006:45-59).

¹² Some of which were the National Liberation struggle in Vietnam; civil rights and anti-war movements in Vietnam; student riots in Western Europe; and Che Guevara’s pursuit of revolution in Bolivia.

¹³ From 1975 to 1977 (Ruud et al. 2004:362-363).

with tribals to prevent this (Suri 2002:23). The spread of Naxalite ideology and political practice was initiated through mass organisations, like agricultural labourers associations, student and youth organisations in the Northern part¹⁵ of Andhra Pradesh (Balagopal 2006:3183).

The CPI (M-L) PW¹⁶ was formed in Northern Andhra Pradesh in 1980 (SATP 2008). It quickly spread to other districts in Andhra Pradesh and the bordering states¹⁷ and the group aimed to unite all Naxalite groups under the banner of:

“overthrowing the bureaucrat comprador bourgeoisie and big landlord classes who control state power in collusion with imperialism and to establish in its place the New Democratic State under the leadership of the proletariat with the ultimate aim of establishing socialism and communism” (SATP).

The general secretary of the CPI (ML) PW, Kondapalli Seetharamaiah was a follower of Charu Majumdar¹⁸ (Singh 2006:133). In the early years, Seetharamaiah aimed to strengthen the movement through its front organisations¹⁹ and focused less on armed struggle.

Shortly after the emergence of People’s War, the Congress Party declared all areas with Naxalite presence as ‘disturbed areas’, under the Disturbed Areas Act of 1976²⁰, and police was granted special powers in dealing with the Naxalite groups and its front organisations. This in turn heightened the levels of repression and impunity on part of state forces (Reddy 1989:316; Reddy 2008:42). The popular support for the Congress party gradually declined and in

¹⁴ In 1979 the administration failed to implement a law under the Andhra Pradesh Land Transfer Regulation Act of 1959, to prevent the alienation of land from tribals. For more information on the Land Transfer Act, please visit: <http://www.aptribes.gov.in/html/tcr/fltr-1959.pdf>.

¹⁵ Often called ‘Telangana’ and until 1956, when Andhra Pradesh gained status as a separate state, encompassed neighbouring districts in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra (Routledge 1997:2170).

¹⁶ The group was a break away group from the Central Organising Committee CPI (ML) which had been founded in 1972. The COC CPI (ML) re-emerged as a continuation of the Majumdar led original CPI (ML) that had suffered losses and set-backs after severe state repression during the Srikakulam struggle in AP from 1969-1972 (Singh 2006:130).

¹⁷ Like Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Maharashtra.

¹⁸ Charu Majumdar was killed by government forces in 1972, which was a major setback for the group.

¹⁹ Radical Student’s Union, Radical Youth League, Rythu Coolie Sangham, Mazdoor Kisan Sangathan and Mahila Sravanthi.

²⁰ For more information on the background and content of the act, please visit: <http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/actandordinances/DistributedAct.htm>

the 1983 elections the newly emerging Telugu Desam Party (TDP)²¹ won (Reddy 1989:239). According to Varavara Rao (2008:[telephone interview]) and Shashidhar Reddy (2008:42) the TDP addressed the Naxalites as ‘patriots’ and greeted them with their own ‘Laal Salaam’, meaning ‘Red Salute’. The TDP used a rhetoric which appealed to people’s regional identity and Naxalites’ construction of a corrupted Indian state, because they proclaimed to fight for “the restoration of respect for Telugus” and fight the “corruption administration of the Congress” (Suri 2002:26). According to Suri (2002:33), the Karamchedu massacre of Dalits by Kamma²² landlords in 1985, triggered resentment and alienated Dalits as TDPs support base, this is because the TDP was seen as the Kamma Raj.²³ The TDP responded with repression and made use of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA)²⁴. Varavara Rao (2008:[telephone interview]) asserts that this was the first time TADA had been applied outside Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir: “Over 13,000 people were arrested under the act. This outnumbered Jammu and Kashmir altogether.”

As a consequence of increased repression by the government, the leadership of the CPI (ML) PW pursued a more radical line which proclaimed; “annihilating class enemies” and “liquidating the feudal class in the countryside” (Banerjee 2006:3160; Singh 2006:133). It increased its emphasis on protracted armed struggle through organising guerrilla warfare, while simultaneously organising associated front organisation. As a result of this dual strategy, the CPI (ML) launched the slogan of “one man, one village, one action” (Routledge 1997:2175-6). A representative would infiltrate a village over time, eventually set up an armed squad²⁵ consisting of four or five people, and initiate some

²¹ This party was regionally oriented and focused on the elevation of Telugu history and identity.

²² Name for a dominant Peasant caste in Andhra Pradesh (Srinivasulu 2002:vi)

²³ In contrast the Congress was seen as the Reddy Raj (Suri 2002:33).

²⁴ For more information on TADA please visit: <http://www.legalserviceindia.com/helpline/help7a.htm>

²⁵ Called Dalam. In the early eighties there were fifty Dalams operating in Telangana district (Singh 2006:132). For a map on the organisational structure see appendix 4.

form of social action or protest²⁶. Guerrilla warfare entailed building up bases in rural and remote areas, and ultimately transform the guerrilla zones into 'liberated zones' for the people, and as a part of that strategy the PW expanded its areas to Chhattisgarh (SATP 2008). According to Singh (2006:135) the movement's objectives was to enforce redistribution of land, payment of minimum wages, imposing taxes and penalties, holding people's court²⁷, destroying government property, targeting government functionaries and policemen and enforce social codes²⁸. In this the movement was successful. Land was redistributed; landlords were sanctioned for discriminatory practices against tribals and lower castes felt empowered to stand up and fight for their cause. In the same period Naxalites caused extensive damage to government properties and policemen were killed to counter state repression (Singh 2006:135-6). In 1986 the State Committee of the PW issued a public statement;

“The Andhra Pradesh Government has mounted repression on a large scale for the past few years in order to destroy the peasant movement launched by revolutionaries. The NTR²⁹ government has waged an undeclared war on these revolutionaries and is encouraging the police officers to kill the revolutionaries in so-called encounters. They have killed 70 revolutionaries during the past two years. So, the situation has arisen when the revolutionaries have to protect themselves and to mount counter-action.” (Singh 2006:136).

Towards the end of the TDP rule in 1989, gross violations of human rights, fake encounters and false cases against youth were registered (Rao 2008; Reddy 2008:42). Varavara Rao (2008) describes the period from 1980 to 1989 as the period with; “no cultural performance, no speech, no song.” He said; “it was a period of undeclared emergency, except for the period between 1983 and 1985, when N.T. Rama Rao came to power.”

²⁶ This could entail the killing of a landlord, attack on government representatives or organise collective protestst (Routledge 1997:2175-6; Varavara Rao and interviews with former members).

²⁷ Also called 'Jan Andalats'.

²⁸ In 1987 the CPI (ML) PW gained popularity when it banned consumption of alcohol and forcibly closed down liqueur stores. They simultaneously launched campaigns against gambling and prostitution in Telangana district. These campaigns were undertaken through village visits and wall posters (Singh 2006:138).

²⁹ N.T. Rama Rao, which was the leader of the Telugu Desam Party.

In the mid 1989 a police force meant to deal with Naxal activities came into being in Andhra Pradesh; ‘the Greyhounds’. Its main objective was; “...to deal effectively with the Left wing extremist violence on the law and order front and other situations arising out of unforeseen situations” (Police 2008). In addition there were several anti-Naxal vigilante groups³⁰ that conducted indiscriminate killings of alleged sympathizers of the Naxalite movement. According to a report published by the Asian Centre for Human Rights, these groups are still operative today and are backed by the state government, despite the government dismissing such accusations (ACHR 2006).

2.4.2 1990s

When Congress returned to power in 1989, the ban was lifted and Naxalite groups were allowed to hold public meetings and rallies. Varavara Rao (2008:[interview]) said that during a rally in Warangal up to 14 000 people participated. Despite the removal of bans, Naxalite movements engaged in extortions of traders and continued to hold Jan Andalats³¹: “to deal with legal matters, family disputes, corruption in the administration and dowry harassment cases” (Singh 2006:140). Consequently, the Chief Minister accused Naxalites of running parallel governments and responded with police forces in an attempt to obstruct such activities. As a consequence violence peaked. However, Naxalites proved a fierce opponent to the Border Security Force (BSF)³² boosted their self-confidence (Singh 2006:141). In response to the violence unleashed by the Andhra Security Forces after the ban was reinstated, the Naxalites conducted retaliatory attacks on government buildings and officials³³.

³⁰ Here is a list of some of these groups: Narsa Cobras, Kakatiya Cobras, Nallamala Cobras, Fear Vikas, Praja Bandhu, Green Tigers, Red Tigers, Kranti Sena, Nalla Dandu, Nallamalla Tigers, Tirumalla Tigers, Palnadu Tigers (Venugopal 2005; ACHR 2006).

³¹ People’s Court.

³² For more information on the history and role of BSF, please visit: <http://bsf.nic.in/introduction.htm>

³³ For more details on the violence and killings, read Singh 2006, pp. 142-143.

CPI (ML) Janashakti was formed on July 30th in 1992 (SATP 2008).³⁴ It was the result of a merger between seven communist groups³⁵. In the first years the party focused on building and supporting trade unions and peasant movements.³⁶ The movement participated in both mainstream politics and engaged in armed struggle, which entailed a combination of both legal and illegal methods. During the first years the party was successful and won a seat in the Andhra Legislative Assembly (Massline.info 2005; (CPI-ML) 2007). The initial split came in 1996 and several followed³⁷. In 1997 a section broke out as a result of debates over caste. The outbreak group accused the leadership of ignoring questions of caste discrimination. As a result these contenders formed their own group, the Communist Party of the United States of India (CPUSI), which in the current decade is perceived as an illegal underground party engaging in guerrilla warfare³⁸. At the end of the 1990s Janashakti reoriented itself towards investing more time in armed struggle (Massline.info 2005).

In 1994 the TDP returned to power and the period until the first half of 2000 was marked by persistent violent and lethal encounters between state forces and Naxalites (Reddy 2008:48). In 1998 the Union Home Minister L.K. Advani held a public speech at the Chief Minister's conference in Hyderabad, in which he described: "Left-wing extremist ideology as the enemy of development which tries to gain intellectual legitimacy by exploiting the plight of the poor and the weak" (Reddy 2008:49-60). Reddy (2008:49) argues that Advani called for a non-political and security oriented approach and accredited the TDP government in Andhra Pradesh for having dealt effectively with Naxalites. In

³⁴ CPI (ML) Janashakti has mainly been active in Andhra Pradesh, Massline.Info (2005) reports that it has an active wing in Bihar as well.

³⁵ CPI (ML) Resistance, a faction of the Unity Centre of Communist Revolutionaries of India (ML), CPI (ML) Agami Yug, CPI (ML) of Paila Vasudev Rao, CPI (ML) Khokan Majumdar, Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (CCCR) and Communist Revolutionary Group for Unity (CRGU) (Massline.info 2005; SATP 2008).

³⁶ Pursuing a 'mass line' adopted by Chandra Pulla Reddy and T. Nagi Reddy.

³⁷ A faction left the movement to merge with another competing Naxal movement, the CPI (ML) Unity Initiative. This group in turn merged with the CPI (ML) People's War in 1998. Both these factions lay more emphasis on guerrilla warfare than mass mobilisation.

³⁸ <http://www.hindu.com/2005/08/24/stories/2005082417560100.htm>.

the same year the CPI (ML) PW merged with CPI (ML) Party Unity³⁹ and was perceived as an even more powerful threat to the state government, which heightened the level of repression on their part. As an extension of this the TDP launched a rhetoric in which they claimed Naxalites had to be fought with counter-terrorism laws (Reddy 2008:50).

2.4.3 Current Decade

The first half of 2000 was marked by a climate for peace talks. Ghanta (2008) contends that the idea of ‘peace talks’ emerged in 1996 in after a TADA case hearing, in which Justice M.N Rao of AP high court had stated that: “while left-wing extremism is viewed as problem for the administration, it is increasingly being perceived as a solution to their problems by the alienated masses”. Rao encouraged a peace commission to be formed which could inquire about police encounters and violence and find solutions to the conflicts (Ghanta 2008). The first attempt for peace talks was in 2002, but culminated into a wave of violence in which both sides accused each other of not refraining from violence during the talks (Reddy 2008:52-3). Ghanta (2008) asserts that during the 2004 elections the Congress party contested the TDP dismissal of unconditional talks with Naxalites, and gained sufficient votes to come to power again. Consequently, the Congress party announced ‘ceasefire’ and lifted the bans which had been in place for nine years, to create a conducive environment peace talks with the CPI (ML) PW and CPI (ML) Janashakti (Ibid.).⁴⁰ The groups were allowed to come overground and conduct mass meetings and rallies. However, the peace talks failed, allegedly over questions concerning land, where the government accused Naxalites of lacking knowledge in the issue. At the end of 2004 the government had resumed their practices of encounter killings and combing operations. In September the same year the talks failed, the CPI (M) was formed under the leadership of

³⁹ For more information on the CPI (ML) Party Unity and details on this merger, please visit: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/CPI_M.htm

⁴⁰ For information on the details for the peace talks, please read Ghanta (2008), URL: http://cgnet.in/N1/ghanta/document_view

Ganapathy⁴¹. It was a result of a merger between the MCC⁴² and CPI (ML) PW⁴³ (SATP). Both these factions had guerrilla armies which merged into the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA)⁴⁴ and during this decade their activities reduced in Andhra Pradesh and increased in Chhattisgarh.

2.5 Naxalites in Chhattisgarh

Until 2000 Chhattisgarh was part of the state of Madhya Pradesh (ACHR 2006:13). Naxalites initiated their activities in the Bastar region in the 1980s, which today makes up the southern part of Chhattisgarh state⁴⁵ (HRW 2008:21). According to Nandini Sundar (2007:271) the CPI (ML) PW came in armed squads⁴⁶ consisting of five to six people and took up immediate cases of exploitation. By 1995 mass organisations⁴⁷ addressing compensation and relief for famine, demands for health and educational facilities, or higher rates for *tendu* leaves⁴⁸ were active. In some areas the traditional priests⁴⁹ and village headmen⁵⁰ were replaced by Naxalite village committees⁵¹ which called meetings on economic and political issues (Sundar 2007:273; HRW 2008:20). Sundar (2007:275) argues that throughout the 1980s until 2005 the police in Chhattisgarh was unsuccessful in curbing the spread of Naxalite groups.

2.5.1 Current Decade (2000)

In 2005 a state government intelligence report claimed that Naxalites were present in nine out of 16 districts in the state of Chhattisgarh (ACHR 2006).

⁴¹ His real name is Muppala Lakshman Rao.

⁴² This group has traditionally had a foothold in Bihar and Jharkhand with some influence in the neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal, Uttaranchal and some pockets in Madhya Pradesh.

⁴³ This group has been mostly active in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

⁴⁴ For more information on their programme concerning Guerrilla Warfare, see: http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/terrorist_outfits/peoples_guerrilla_arms_left_wing_extremists.htm

⁴⁵ This region encompasses the district of Dantewada, from where informants that refrained from joining the Naxalite movement draw their experiences.

⁴⁶ Called *Dalams*.

⁴⁷ Like for example the Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor (DAKMS).

⁴⁸ Leaves used for local cigarettes and sold at weekly markets.

⁴⁹ Called *Perma*.

⁵⁰ Called *Patel*.

⁵¹ Called *Sangams*.

According to Human Rights Watch 70 percent of the state lacks adequate local government administrations. HRW (2008:21) estimates that tribal people⁵² make up approximately 32 percent of the total population of the state, and according to Agarwal (2007:23) Naxalite groups have been significant in securing their access to forest, which has generated significant support from this population.

In the summer of 2005 the anti-Naxalite group, Salwa Judum was formed (CPJC 2007:4). In the local *Gond* tribal dialect, Salwa Judum means: ‘purification hunt’. According to the ACHR (2006:15), the supporters of this anti-Naxal campaign translates it as a ‘peace campaign’ and claim it to be a spontaneous uprising among tribal people that no longer tolerate the presence of Naxalites in their environment. In 2006 the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL 2006) published a report which was based on research conducted by several representatives from five major human rights organisations in India⁵³. Their research revealed that the Salwa Judum is not a spontaneous uprising, but a state-organized anti-insurgency. The report also states that Naxalites have widespread support among the local population; therefore it is difficult for the government to isolate Naxalites. As a result the government started clearing villages and forcing people into refugee camps. In January 2007, an official figure of 47, 238 people living in government run camps was registered, which in practice are organised and supervised by the Salwa Judum insurgency (CPJC 2007:12-13). The CPJC report estimates that 100, 000 people have been displaced. The process of moving the local population into refugee camps⁵⁴ has been one in which Salwa Judum members and police personnel have worked in collusion and employed high levels of violence (HRW 2008:29-45). Human Rights Watch also noted that Salwa

⁵² Of these tribal groups, Maria Gonds and Dorlas account for 82 percent of the rural population Dantewada district (PUCL 2006:5).

⁵³ The People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand respectively, People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) in Delhi, Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) in West-Bengal, and Indian Association for People’s Lawyers (IAPL).

⁵⁴ Often referred to as Salwa Judum Camps.

Judum arranged village meetings where a common speech would be the following:

“We [the Salwa Judum] won’t keep Naxalites in this country. We will chase them away to another country. We will all form Salwa Judum together and chase Naxalites. Come and stay with us in the camps to help us fight Naxalites” (HRW 2008:33).

The Report (HRW 2008:97-141) also collected stories of abuses by Naxalites, such as intimidation, abductions, beatings, extortions and summary executions.

2.6 The Actors

Dalits, tribal groups and Other Backward Castes (OBC) have been formed the basis groups from which Naxalites draw their support. However, according to Naxalite ideology revolution must be forwarded by a vanguard group. Until the end of the 1990s, this vanguard group has composed of higher castes, in particular Brahmins, which constituted an urban intellectual elite (Routledge 1997:2177). Dalits, tribals and OBCs have also been given the administrative terms, Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and OBC, for the provision of reservations in education and employment in state institutions. in India (Bijoy 2003:xx; Frøystad 2005).

2.6.1 Dalits and the Caste System

Menon and Nigam (2007:19) argue that to understand Dalits’ role in society, their story can only be told with reference to the history of caste oppression. Dag Erik Berg (2007:22) emphasise that the formation of Dalit identity in post-colonial India still “suggests that the oppressive everyday reality of caste endures, being reflected in the self-chosen name Dalit.” Dalit derives from Sanskrit “Dal” and means “broken, ground-down, downtrodden or oppressed” (NCDHR 2008). Waldorp (2004:211-212) contends that the term ‘Dalit’ was chosen explicitly to oppose the words ‘untouchable’⁵⁵ and ‘Harijan’⁵⁶. ‘Untouchable’ is a derogatory and discriminatory term that suggests in

⁵⁵ Which derives from Hindu notions of purity and pollution.

⁵⁶ This term was used by Gandhi and meant ‘Children of God’ (Frøystad 2005:xvi).

individual is polluted and can not be touched. As a consequence Dalits were not considered clean enough by Hindus to be part of their Varna System⁵⁷ (Ahuja and Ganguly 2007:272). The caste system stratified people in terms of division of labour, wealth and power (Kolenda 1997:4-10). However, through processes of sanscritization it was possible for lower castes to mobilize upwards and attain higher statuses inside the caste system, adding a dynamic dimension to caste identity. This was usually done through emulating Brahmanical dietary and ritual habits (Ruud, Mageli et al. 2004:268). Because of the hereditary values and religious beliefs about purity and pollution and division of labour, caste identity has been a hidden principle that has given access to modern privileges because of its functions as cultural and symbolic capital (Menon and Nigam 2007:19).

2.6.2 Other Backward Castes

Caste issues emerged on the political and news agenda with the implementation of preferential treatment of OBCs by the Union government in 1990 (Frøystad 2005:228). Menon and Nigam (2007:15-35) argues that after the 1990s Mandal politics caste re-emerged in the media, as the OBC suddenly was suggested as a new term for lower castes that were not registered as SCs, but yet faced discrimination and marginalisation in society. Yet, the policies of reservations have remained in place in an attempt to ameliorate the situation for SCs, STs and OBCs, which Menon and Nigam (ibid.) assert only a restricted number of people have benefited from.

2.6.3 Tribals

There are currently 67.7 million people listed as ‘Scheduled Tribes’ (SC) in India. In the post-colonial period tribal people have been referred to as ‘Adivasis’, which is Sanskrit and means ‘indigenous people’ or ‘original inhabitants’ (Bijoy 2003; Sundar 2007). Because the term does not derive from any tribal language and it is therefore a Hinduized term (Menon and Nigam

⁵⁷ Also called *Caste* system.

2007:38-9). Tribal groups which have relevance for this study are the *Dorlas* and *Murias* in Chhattisgarh⁵⁸(HRF 2006:21), and according to B.D. Sherma (2001:440) they are enlisted as STs in the “Scheduled Tribes in State and Union Territories”. Menon and Nigam (2007:38) argue that tribal groups are products of different historical and social conditions, speak different languages and are religiously diverse, some adhering to animism, others Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. Tribal people fall outside the traditional Hindu caste system. They are not regarded as ‘unclean’ in the same way Dalits have been discriminated, but face the prejudice of being considered as “lesser human beings” (Bijoy 2003).

2.7 Caste, Class and Competing Ideologies

2.7.1 Naxalism on Caste, Tribal and Gender

Tarrow’s (1998:109) definition of Mao Tse-tung’s variant of Marxism, which the Naxalite movement pursue, frames Marxism as a struggle of colonial people “based in the countryside of the world against the parasitic cities, under the leadership of a vanguard group rooted in the peasantry.” The programme of the CPI (ML) in the 1970s stated that:

“India is a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country, the Indian state is the state of the big landlords and comprador bureaucrat capitalists and its government is a lackey of U.S imperialism and Soviet social imperialism...the Indian revolution at this stage is the democratic revolution of the new type- the People's Democratic Revolution- the main content of which is the agrarian revolution” (Gatade 2000).

Gatade (2000) argues that this understanding of Indian society, became the ideological basis on which the movement aimed to build a worker-peasant alliance, following Mao’s theory of protracted people’s war and forward the New Democratic Revolution to fight their enemy. Mohanty (2006:3164-65) argues that the movement has failed to address the class - caste - tribal and gender issues, because of their interpretation of society and insistence that

⁵⁸ These groups are called *Koyas* and *Gothi Koyas* respectively, in the Telugu speaking state of Andhra Pradesh (HRF 2006:21).

united class struggle is the only solution for the betterment of poor and discriminated people.

2.7.2 Ambedkarism on Caste and Class

The modern Dalit discourse can only be understood in relation to Babasahed Ambedkar (Gakkestad 2006:26). Berg (2007:23) contends that Ambedkar⁵⁹ was a key symbol for Dalit identity and politics in India. Ambedkar (1979:143) argues that in society caste is made up of classes. These classes may be economic, social or intellectual, and an individual is always a member of a class. Ambedkar thinks that assertion of class-theory in the Marxist sense might be an exaggeration, but that the existence of definite classes in society is a fact. It is their basis that might differ. He further argues that caste and class are “next door neighbours”. To trace the genesis of caste one must determine which class in the Hindu system made itself into a caste. For Ambedkar caste is class. Although Dalit Associations explicitly renounce armed struggle as a means for achieving justice, Naxal and Dalit ideology do share a leftist and Marxist understanding of the world (Menon and Nigam 2007:97).

3.0 THEORY

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this research is the actors’ perspectives and experiences of having been a part of, left or refrained from participation in a Naxalite group. The narratives of the interviewees will be compared to the interpretive frames of Naxalite groups they were a part of, or those they chose to refrain from, as well as the competing interpretive frames offered by Indian authorities. The main emphasis is on the various interactive and communicative actions⁶⁰ Naxalites and state representatives have undertaken over time, in the attempt to compete with each other in gaining people’s support. Although networks, cultural

⁵⁹ For extensive information of the life and works of B.R. Ambedkar visit: <http://www.ncdhr.org.in/ncdhr/general-info-misc-pages/dr-ambedkar> or <http://www.dr-ambedkar.com/writings-link.htm>

⁶⁰ These actions are defined as ‘Micromobilization tasks’ by the authors and will be described in section 3.2.1.

beliefs, ideology and identity were central in the mobilization and sustenance of members joining, those experiences were largely sustained through concrete actions within the movement as well as structural conditions and events in society at large. The focus of this study is to describe how the concrete experiences of members fit into this cultural, ideological and structural context.

To adopt an analytical framework for contextualizing informants' experiences it has been necessary to synthesise a range of theories and critiques to that of frame alignment process theory, which is central to this section. The main challenge has been to extend and integrate theories of mainstream social movements that allow for using frame alignment theory in a setting consisting of a revolutionary movement met with high levels of state repression in a supposedly democratic country like India. In the following sections the concept of frame alignment processes will be defined, and then extended with critiques and clarified in terms of how it will be applied to the analysis section.

3.2 Frame Alignment Processes

In order to understand how people frame their motivations for joining, leaving and refraining from membership in Naxalite movements in Warangal, Khammam and Dantewada districts, I have applied elements from the theory of *frame alignment processes* (Snow, Worden et al. 1986). This is a conceptual framework that looks at both socio-psychological and resource mobilization factors for why people engage in collective action. Snow et al. (1986:464) describe four frame alignment processes they claim are preconditions for participation in a social movement. These are *frame bridging*, *frame amplification*, *frame extension* and *frame transformation*. These processes constitute the discursive, strategic and goal oriented feature of social movements, in which frames are developed and deployed for specific purposes (Benford and Snow 2000:622-25). The underlying arguments of this theory are that; participation in social movements is contingent on a degree of resonance and alignment between an individual and a social movement's interpretive frames. Secondly, frame alignment can not be assumed given the existence of

grievances or social movements. Thirdly, frame alignment is only temporally available and subject to continuous negotiation and reassessment. Fourthly, in one way or another it is a crucial aspect of adherent and constituent mobilisation. Lastly, each frame alignment process requires differing micromobilization tasks (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:476-8). My main emphasis will be on aspects related to frame resonance, temporal availability and use of micromobilization tasks to sustain and negotiate frames. Before addressing central components of this theory, the concepts of “frame”, “framing”, “collective action frames” and “micromobilization tasks” will be defined.

3.2.1 Frames

According to Erving Goffman (1974:21), a frame is a “schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their lives and the world at large”. These frames ultimately organize experience and guide individual or collective action. Framing is defined as an; “active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction.” (Benford and Snow 2000:614). The outcome of such an active, processual, agency oriented and contentious framing activity are referred to as collective action frames (ibid.). Collective action frames are sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimize activities and campaigns of a social movement, and forms the basis on which people act, the outcome of negotiated and shared meaning. Snow et al. (1986:464-5) argue that social movements devise and employ a range of interactive and communicative processes to mobilize or influence target groups in pursuit of collective action frames. These processes are defined as micromobilization⁶¹ tasks and have great influence on the four processes of frame alignment. Snow et al.’s definition is broad, thus I have chosen to define micromobilization tasks as the locale where social movement representatives physically interact and verbally communicate with potential adherents. In this

⁶¹ The process of micromobilization is contrasted to the larger macro-processes that might influence frame alignment process such as change in power relationships and political opportunity structures (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:464-5).

locale, initial experiences of the movement are formed, interpretive frames conferred and concrete experiences as member are shaped. Thus it is through micromobilization tasks collective action frames are negotiated and meanings added to individuals' lives, either potential members or constituents.

3.2.2 Master Frames and Revolutionary Movements

The latter frame alignment process of 'frame transformation' is the aspect most relevant to this study. Snow et al.(1986:473-8) assert that in a process of frame transformation, social movements seek to change old understandings and meanings of potential adherents and thus generate new ones. A frequent goal of such a movement is systemic alteration. Snow et al. hold that in "cycles of protest", a concept drawn from Tarrow (1998), new interpretive frames are generated that not only inspire and justify, but simultaneously give meaning and legitimacy to tactics that evolve from collective action. From this Snow et al. derive their argument that: "some social movements function early on as progenitors of master frames⁶² that provide the ideational and interpretive anchoring for subsequent movements later on in the cycle" (1986:477). Thus there is a cyclical variation in the predominance of various types of frame alignment, so that frame transformation is more likely to be predominant in the initial stages, followed by amplification, bridging and extension.

The objective of systemic alteration is a characteristic suitable for revolutionary communist movements, such as Naxalite movements. Some Naxalite groups pursue guerrilla warfare tactics, but many combine this with non-violent politics and some participate in parliamentary elections. Jeremy Weinstein (2007:7-16) defines revolutionary communist movements as a type of activist rebellion. Activist rebellions are common in resource-poor areas and have a strong ideological orientation. They normally attract the most committed individuals due to the promises of long-term gains and less material incentives.

⁶² A master frame is a collective action frame that is broad in terms of scope and function as a guiding set of instructions that influence and constrain orientations and activities of other movements (Benford and Snow 2000:618).

Activist rebellions are the opposite of opportunistic rebellions, which are common in resource-rich areas. Opportunistic rebellions attract people wanting short-term material gains (Weinstein 2007:10-16). According to Weinstein (2007:7-29) activist rebellions are selective in the use of violence and emphasise internal discipline, because their existence is dependent on the support of local populations for food, shelter, supplies and intelligence.

All Naxalite movements work to sustain the common master frame of constructing a new democratic Indian state, which was promoted by the original Communist Movement of India (Marxist-Leninist) in Naxalbari from 1968-1972. Therefore their goal is to achieve and sustain frame transformation through bridging, amplification and extension. Weinstein (2007:260-296) asserts that activist rebellions may attain opportunistic features over time. In the case of Naxalite movements this is evident in the increased focus on guerrilla warfare, lesser ability to be selective in terms of targets⁶³, and more coercive recruitment strategies. Yet, contrary to Weinstein's arguments of opportunistic rebellions being centred on material gains, Naxalite movements have continued to pursue a strong ideological orientation and do not offer potential adherents or members financial compensation.

A theory of frame alignment processes aims to provide a framework for understanding how leaders of social movements are able to orient a movement's frame towards collective action in specific contexts; and how these frames are moulded at the intersection between a target population's cultural values and preferences and the movement's own values and goals. Frame alignment theory will not be used to explore the meso-level and top-down approach like that of Snow et al. The focus will be on the processual interactive and communicative encounter between the social movement and individuals, as framed by the actors themselves. It is by describing the capacity, success or failure of negotiating frames and sustaining them through

⁶³ Civilians get killed during attacks.

micromobilization tasks over time that something can be said about why people join in, leave or chose not to engage in collective action.

3.2.3 Collective Action Frames and Core Framing Tasks

Collective action frames are:

“constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change” (Benford and Snow 2000:615).

Core framing tasks are the action-oriented function of collective action frames. Snow and Benford (2000:615) refer to these core framing tasks as diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing. Social movements’ objectives are to remedy or alter a problematic situation or issue. Therefore; “directed action is contingent on identification of the source (s) of causality, blame and culpable agents.” In diagnostic framing, blame and responsibility are identified by the movement. However disagreements among and within social movements in regard to the causality of blame may occur. Prognostic framing offers a proposed solution and strategy to remedy the diagnosis. Snow and Benford (2000:616) argue that there is correspondence between diagnostic and prognostic framings. Yet, ‘counter-framing’ may occur in which the logic of a solution is refuted. If this happens it may affect a movement’s framing and force a renegotiation of the existing interpretive frame. The latter type of core framing task is motivational framing. This is the rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, a “call for arms”. It is the agency component for collective action frames. Core framing tasks are discursive in nature. Comprehending diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing on a micro-level can aid in understanding the actor’s narratives of joining, leaving and refraining from membership.

3.3 The Framing Processes

Snow and Benford (2000:624) assert that frame transformation, bridging, amplification and extension are strategic utilitarian goal oriented processes social movements employ to recruit members, mobilize adherents and acquire

resources. Frame transformation is the central focus for the analysis, as Naxalite movements seek systemic transformation. The other three processes are complimentary in sustaining such frame transformation and in recruiting new members, although frame amplification proved itself more prominent than bridging and extension. This is because it is related to aspects of values and beliefs, which in turn are linked to culture and identity. The strategic tools of frame alignment will be examined in order to understand; primarily, how informants' narratives and modes of framing relate to the various processes; and secondly, if success or failure in employing such strategies through micromobilization tasks affected the decision to join, remain, leave or refrain from membership.

3.3.1 Frame Transformation

In a number of cases, the programmes, causes and values that some social movement organisations promote may not resonate with, or may even appear antithetical to conventional lifestyles and existing interpretive frames. When this is the case, new values must be introduced, old meaning rejected and “misframings” reframed, in order to retain support and secure participation, hence the necessity of frame transformation (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:473). Activities and events that had some meaning in a primary framework are now redefined to be seen as something else or different. This process of “transcription can be called “keying”” (Goffman 1974:43-44), which is a systemic alteration that radically reconstitute what it is going on for participants. Snow et al. (1986:474-76) have identified two types of transformation processes essential to movement recruitment and participation; transformations of *domain-specific* and *global interpretive frames*. Both these processes entail a reframing of some set of conditions. There are two analytically distinct aspects relevant to this type of interpretive change and reframing. The first is the adoption of an injustice frame. What was earlier seen as unfortunate, but tolerable, is now defined as unjust and immoral. However, the development and adoption of an injustice frame must be accompanied by a corresponding shift in attributional orientation. This means that a life of

impoverishment may be defined as unjust, but its linkage to action is partly dependent on whether blame or responsibility is internalized or externalized. This “shift in attributional orientation is a common constituent of mobilization for and participation in movements that seek change by directly altering socio-political structures” (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:474). The shift involves change from self-blaming to structural-blaming and from victim-blaming to system-blaming. The shift towards an injustice frame is common for both types of frame transformations, but there are also differences between them. The following paragraphs will address these differences.

Domain-specific interpretive transformations entail self-contained but substantial changes in the way a particular domain of life is framed. Snow et al. (1986:474) assert that domains are infinite aspects of life; such as dietary habits, consumption patterns, leisure activities, social relationships, social statuses and self-perception. In this particular study these domains are limited to social relationships, social status and self-perception. Transformation in domain specific interpretive frames can be manifested in two ways. Firstly, a domain that was previously taken for granted is suddenly seen as problematic and must be attended to. Secondly, a domain that is seen as normative or acceptable is reframed in terms of an injustice and thus warrants change. Domain-specific transformations seem to be a necessary condition for participation in social movements that seek dramatic change in the status, treatment, or activity of a category of people. This may be changing the relationship between two or more categories of people, like many ethnic or racial movements do. In the case of Naxalite movements, they seek to alter the status of lower and middle castes, and that of tribals in society through forming a class identity which ultimately will be of equal status and have rights alongside to that of other classes in the society. Snow et al. (1986) underline that the success of domain-specific transformations also rest on effecting changes in the way potential constituents not only view their life situation, but also their identity.

The latter type of frame transformation is that of a shift in the *global interpretive frame*. In this process a new primary framework gains ascendancy over already existing ones and constitutes a type of master frame that broadens the scope of change.⁶⁴ In this process, domain-specific experiences can be given new meaning and rearranged in accordance with the new master frame. In this type of transformation everything is seen with greater clarity and certainty, eliminating ambiguity, the prevalence of “misframings” and diminishes the boundaries between various domains in life. The above mentioned dynamic processes are not exclusive, but highly interconnected and interactive.

3.3.2 *Frame Extension*

Through frame extension social movements attempt to extend the boundaries of their initial framework to encompass interests or opinion preferences that are not in line with the movement’s initial framework, but of considerable importance to potential members (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:472-3). On a micromobilization level the social movement tries to portray its activities as matching values and interests of potential adherents. The latter may be done through representatives of movements organising recruitment encounters where potential adherents are persuaded to participate in movement meetings or some activity. In these encounters representatives try to discover something of interest to the potential recruit and emphasize that this interest can be realized through participation in the movement (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:473).

3.3.3 *Frame Amplification*

Snow and Benford (2000:624) describe frame amplification as the idealization, embellishment, clarification or invigoration of existing values and beliefs. The authors assert that one of the key factors affecting whether or not a proffered frame resonates with potential constituents is contingent on the capacity of the movement to tap into existing cultural values, beliefs and narratives. *Value*

⁶⁴ In section 3.3 I argued that all Naxal movements follow the ideological groundwork of the Naxalbari

amplification thus “refers to the identification, idealization, and elevation of one or more values presumed basic to prospective constituents but which have not inspired collective action for any number of reasons” (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:469). These values may have been impeded by several factors; they may have atrophied, fallen into disuse, or been suppressed because of a lack of opportunity for expression, a repressive authority structure or absence of an organisational outlet; they might also have been taken for granted, not sufficiently challenged or threatened or they may have had ambiguous relevance to a particular event or issue. If these obstructive factors are operative, then recruitment and mobilization of potential members and supporters will depend on the elevation and reinvigoration of values relevant to the issue or event being promoted or resisted (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:469). Values refer to the goals or end-states that social movements seek to attain or promote.

The second type of frame amplification is *belief amplification*. Beliefs are defined as “the presumed relationship between two things or between something and a characteristic of it.” The authors exemplify this definition with presumptions like “God is dead”, “capitalists are exploiters” and “black is beautiful.” In relation to values, which are seen as the ultimate attainable goals for social movements, beliefs can be “construed as ideational elements that cognitively support or impede action in pursuit of desired values” (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:469-470). The authors have identified five types of beliefs relevant to mobilization and participation processes. The first is a belief about the seriousness of the problem, issue or grievance in question. The second is belief about the locus of causality or blame. The third one is a stereotypic belief about antagonists or targets of influence.⁶⁵ Fourth, is a belief in the probability of change or the efficacy of collective action. Lastly, it is a belief about the necessity and aptness of standing up. The two first ones are more relevant to frame transformation, whereas the three latter ones fit well within frame amplification. Participation in a movement is contingent on the amplification or

movement which seeks to overthrow the Indian state and form a communist one.

transformation of one or more of the above mentioned beliefs. The third type of belief regarding stereotypes, often function as “unambiguous coordinating symbols that galvanize and focus sentiment” (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:470). By amplifying selected beliefs that are already associated with certain types of antagonists, sentiments can galvanize and stereotypes are created or reinforced. Social action is frequently contingent on the belief that collective action is efficient, which is the fourth type of belief; people must have faith that change is possible, but that it will not happen automatically, and therefore necessitates collective action. “Optimism about the outcome of a collective challenge will enhance the probability of participation, pessimism will diminish it” (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:470). Optimistic or pessimistic beliefs about the efficacy of collective action are temporally and contextually variable and subject to micromobilization efforts to amplify them. This aspect is intimately linked to the latter type of belief, regarding the necessity and propriety of “standing up”. This type refers to a belief about the instrumentality of one’s own efforts in pursuit of some movement goal. It can be evident in an “if-I-don’t-do-it-no-one-will” type of rhetoric. It is partly rooted in a pessimistic belief about the probability of some other potential participant actually “standing up” (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:471). The authors assert that their research revealed two important aspects in regards to the necessity of “standing up”. Firstly, the movement activist repeatedly communicated the importance of individuals’ contribution and that their voices did count. Secondly, there was a strong belief among participants that there is no other alternative than “standing up”. This sensation of necessity and there being no alternative is, as Snow et al. argue, linked to a sentiment of propriety or obligation; a type of moral obligation to “do the right thing”. However this individual belief in the moral obligation to do right is influenced by cultural norms and values which vary across time and space. These obligations are often directed towards those groups with which the individual identifies. To increase the prospect of potential participants to join, it is necessary to amplify these beliefs so that individuals see participation

⁶⁵ The first three types relate to diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing.

as a moral obligation. In this study the beliefs about propriety is intimately linked to their self-perceived identity, which will be discussed in the section on critiques and extension of frame alignment.

3.3.4 Frame Bridging

In frame bridging two or more ideologically congruent, but unconnected frames are linked together regarding a particular issue or problem. In this process a social movement tries to relate to the “unmobilized sentiments pools” of people who share the same views or grievances, but who lack the organizational base for expressing them (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:467). This process is effected by the ability to diffuse information through interpersonal or intergroup networks. At the micromobilization level this may entail scoping out a number of potential adherents and subsequently bring these into the social movement infrastructure by working through their preferential information networks. Snow et al. (1986:478) assert that everyday social circles, non-organisational networks as well as smaller organisations may function as important micromobilization agencies.

3.3.5 Frame Resonance and Networks

Snow et al. (1986:477) contend that success or failure of framing processes is contingent on the degree of resonance between an individual’s life situation and experience of potential constituents with the content and substance of social movements’ proffered frames. There are two interacting factors accounting for variation in degree of frame resonance; *credibility* and *relative salience*. Credibility accounts for the perceived contradictions between a movements framing and micromobilization tasks; meaning the distance between what it says and what it does. Credibility also relates to the fit between the frame and events in the world at large. The interesting aspect is how claims are empirically verified by actors and to what degree this aspect was a contributory factor in joining and leaving. The final factor affecting credibility is the perceived credibility of frame articulators. The authors hold that speakers who are regarded as more credible have greater persuasiveness (Benford and Snow

2000:621). In terms of relative salience the characteristics of centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity will be examined (Benford and Snow 2000:621). Centrality is how essential beliefs, values and ideas associated with movement frames are perceived by actors as relevant in their lives. This aspect relates to frame amplification. A second factor contributing to frame salience is how congruent a movement's frame is with an individual's everyday experiences. The last aspect is narrative fidelity and is related to what extent a social movement's frame is resonant with the target's cultural narrations, in other words to what degree are frames culturally resonant.

In the preceding section it was mentioned that networks may function as important micromobilization agencies. Porta and Diani (2006:115) extend this argument by adding that social networks not only facilitate, but are also a product of collective action. People may join because of previous links, but participation also forges new links, which in turn affects developments in an activist's life. The relationship between individuals and the networks in which they are embedded is also important for the sustenance of action over time (Porta and Diani 2006:116). Networks can be organisational, friendship or kinship based. A general tendency is that people often join and leave in clusters and are greatly affected by their closest links (Porta and Diani 2006:118).

3.3.6 Vulnerabilities

Success or failure of framing processes are also dependent on the nature or degree of framing hazards or vulnerabilities that confront social movements as they construct and sustain particular frame alignments (Snow, Worden et al. 1986:478). Frame amplification is vulnerable when a movement fails to uphold core values and beliefs proffered as the centre focus. In frame extension, a social movement may be weakened by the failure to deliver promised auxiliary benefits. Extending a frame may lead to internal disputes, a common one being that of 'ideological purity'. This type of framing mainly addresses internal splits in leadership, but it also accounts for the fact that frames are internally contested and that splits may occur due to the differing views on how a frame

should be extended (Benford and Snow 2000:625). During coalitions, frames may be clouded when a primary framework is extended to encompass goals and issues beyond the scope of the original platform. Frame transformation also faces several hazards. The most relevant is that; movements involved in global transformation may find sudden enthusiasm inside the movement unproblematic, and thus dedicate more time and resources to frame maintenance and ideological work to ward off external threats from other opponents.

3.4 Critiques of Frame Alignment Theory

3.4.1 Conditions of Authoritarianism

Rita K. Noonan's (1995:83) fundamental critique of Snow et al.'s theory of frame alignment is that it does not adequately explain mobilization into social movements under conditions of authoritarianism because the authors assume democratic institutions.⁶⁶ Writing on the case of India, Corbridge and Harris (2000:234) contend that on the one hand common people in India have more voice than they used to and traditional authority has been weakened. On the other hand the concentration of power is growing into the hands of economic and political elites:

“On the one side of the coin India appears to have a vibrant civil society, with what may be the most active and diverse ‘NGO sector’ anywhere in the world, civil rights organizations, vigorous women’s movements, and farmers’ movements and movements of ‘indigenous peoples’ (as tribal groups are described outside India). On the other side there is abundant evidence of the crude violence of the state of India, which is regularly reported in news magazines such as *Frontline* or *Sunday*, as well as by Amnesty International” (Corbridge and Harris 2000:234-239).

The Naxalite movement is in this study defined as a type of activist rebellion. The theory of frame alignment not only presupposes that social movements operate under democratic circumstances, but that the movement itself is legal. Naxalite groups were treated as legal entities and behaved like legal entities in the initial stages of the movement. In the latter two decades the focus on

⁶⁶ It is particularly mobilisation on the basis ideology and beliefs that fall short of explaining social movements under authoritarian conditions, as this presupposes freedom of press and freedom of speech (Noonan 1995:83).

guerrilla warfare has become more prominent, and most Naxalite groups have gone ‘underground’ and become illegal, except some groups that operate ‘overground’ as political parties. Noonan (1995:83) find it difficult to explain why people mobilize in what are seemingly inopportune political moments of protest⁶⁷. In the case of Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the levels of repression on Naxalites from the state governments have fluctuated. Repression has taken the form of unlawful arrests, torture, encounter killings, impunity on behalf of state forces and anti-Naxal vigilante groups and targeting people assumed to be sympathizers or members of any social movement perceived to support a leftist ideology. All the interviewees had experienced some form of repression at varying times during their life in a Naxalite movement, but also outside the movement. Bans on Naxalite movements in Andhra Pradesh have been re-imposed and lifted numerous times in the last three decades, yet the movement has been able to mobilize thousands of people in protests and recruited equally as many members. This suggests that the collective action frame offered by the Naxalite movement must have considerable resonance among members and potential constituents. Furthermore, Naxalite movements have been able to adapt their collective action frames to the dynamic cultural and social surroundings in which they have operated, which Noonan (1995:86) contends is crucial for mobilization. The various types of repression, use of bans and the rhetoric of the authorities can be interpreted as micromobilization tasks employed by state representatives in an attempt to ‘demobilize’ potential adherents and current constituents away from Naxalite movements. This aspect of competition is addressed in the following section.

3.4.2 Competing Actors and Blurred Boundaries

⁶⁷ Due to limited space I could not include extended details in the critique, but the main points are; that models looking at political opportunity structures, like that of Tarrow, are biased in favour of Western democratic conditions, assuming well-functioning constitutional frameworks. In contrast social movements in third world countries are often times rooted in crisis of consumption, like lack of health, food and basic resources, like that of Naxalite protests. Secondly, power sources are often informal and non-traditional, thus power resides in different places for different segments in a population. Thirdly, Tarrow (1998:6-7) argues that for contention to arise, people must perceive changes in political opportunity and common interests to exist. Noonan (1995:84) argue that the problem is how to account for how people make sense of a “ripe” situation.

Sidney Tarrow criticises Snow et al. for not recognising the aspect of competition between actors. Tarrow (1998:110) states that movement leaders frequently compete with other movements, media agents and with the state for cultural supremacy. This dimension explains the structural context over time in which individuals live and decide whether they will join, stay, leave or refrain from participation. By synthesizing arguments from Akhil Gupta (2006:211-242) and that of Snow et al. (1986:464-467) I argue that the physical encounter with state agents can be read as a type of micromobilization task undertaken by state representatives. It is in this encounter with state agents on local levels that the experience of a state is formed, and the competition for people's support takes place. Gupta emphasises that the 'state' is always experienced and interpreted locally:

“where a large number of state officials, constituting the broad base of the bureaucratic pyramid, live and work – the village-level workers, land record keepers, elementary school teachers, agricultural extension agents, the staff of the civil hospital, and others. This is the site where the majority of people in a rural and agricultural country such as India come into contact with “the state”, and this is where many of their images of the state is forged”(Gupta 2006:212).

Gupta asserts that lower-level officials play a crucial role in citizens' encounters with the state. However, at the local level it is difficult to experience the state as an ontologically⁶⁸ coherent entity. What people confront instead is much more discrete and fragmentary – personified by land record officials, village development workers, the electricity Board, headmen, the Police and the Block Development Office (2006:220). I add to this vigilante groups and caste armies. In his research in rural North India, Gupta found that the boundaries between “state” and “society” were often times blurred. Gupta asserts that the Western notion of state builds on the idea of the state putting its employees in locations distinct from their homes to mark their “rationalized” activities as office holders in the bureaucratic system.⁶⁹ Gupta (2006:229-232)

⁶⁸ Ontology is the study or theory of being or existence, it relates to an individual's assumptions about reality (Seymour-Smith 1986:211).

⁶⁹ A Weberian state, in which it is the outcome of the realm of politics emancipated from society and constituted in autonomous political intuitions, i.e. a highly bureaucratic system with defined responsibilities (Chabal and Daloz 1999:3-16).

noted that this division collapsed in the fluctuating boundaries between the role as public servant and private citizen in rural India. Indian responses to Naxalite activity have varied across time and place, and have not necessarily reflected a central government policy. This means that the 'state' should not be represented as a unitary actor, which both Snow et al. (1986) and Tarrow (1998) contend. It is difficult to speak of a clearly defined state, with monopoly of violence, either democratic or authoritarian, with visible actors that have defined roles and responsibilities in the public sphere, and thus separated from the "society".

3.4.3 Repression

In the previous section I mentioned the types of repression employed by state authorities in Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. There are certain implications of responding repressively to a social movement. Tarrow (1998:84-5) points out that repressive states can contribute to a further radicalization of collective action and a more effective organization of opponents. This is because moderate dissenters usually defect into private life and more militant ones take centre stage. In this sense repression can encourage extremism (Tarrow 1998:150). Furthermore, Tarrow (1998:85) says that: "...systemic repression of collective action has the perverse result of lending a political coloration to even ordinary acts". Thus, the absence of regular channels for expressing opinions can turn moderate challengers into enemies of the regime and forces them to pose the problem of regime overthrow as the condition for reform (Tarrow 1998:85). Repression against Naxalite movements has fluctuated in Andhra Pradesh, rendering a fluctuating response of retaliatory attacks by Naxalite movements. Bela Bhatia (2006:3182) concludes in her research on Naxalites that because guerrillas operate underground, activists of mass organizations are the only "visible actors" of the movement and thus become the targets of government forces and are arrested, tortured and imprisoned by police, which is linked to the foregoing argument of Tarrow; that repression of collective action can lend political coloration to even ordinary acts. Snow (1997:89) argues that governments' response to insurgencies articulating their objectives of

overthrowing states often cloud their responses. This is because: “the government’s view of defeating an insurgency is distorted by the fact that the insurgency is directed against it and its policies”. Snow (1997:89-90) argues that this triggers suppressive actions and the suppressors will always see their actions as just, considering the threat the insurgency poses. This is a convincing argument. Nonetheless, in Andhra Pradesh, the threat of Naxalite movements and the response have been guided, not only by the perception of threat, but also by local politics of populism and caste accommodation, rendering not so clear cut responses as theorized by Snow (1997), and leading to a pattern of fluctuating repression.

3.4.4 Ideology

Naxalite movements are Marxist based organisations, drawing heavily on Leninism and particularly Maoism rooted in the Chinese experience. Maoism is by Naxalites considered a more viable orientation in the context of India, because of the agricultural characteristics of its society. Ideology can be seen as a broad, coherent, durable set of beliefs that affects an individual’s orientation to politics and everyday life in general (Geertz 1973:193-233). In India the caste system represents an ideology of Brahmanism that has sustained a division of labour and categorized people in the Indian society according to religious principles of purity and pollution. During Jawaharlal Nehru’s rule, there were attempts to forge an image of a new class-oriented Indian society (Corbridge and Harriss 2000:43-66). In her research from North India, Kathinka Frøystad (2005) found that:

“Local perceptions and interpretations of politics are never direct replicas of political rhetoric and events, but are filtered and flavoured by the knowledge, values, and practices that predominate in the local society” (2005:266).

She concludes that caste still guides relations between people in their everyday lives, because it is to a large extent the value system in place which people are familiar with. This aspect addresses the capacity of class-based ideology to accommodate caste-based identity. Snow and Benford (2000:613) contend that collective action frames function as innovative amplifications and extensions of

existing ideologies or components of such ideologies. Ideology can simultaneously constrain and be a resource in relation to framing processes and collective action frames (Ibid.). In relation to the Naxalite movement I argue that the movements try to counter the already existing ideology shaped by the Varna system⁷⁰, as well as elitist views of class, by offering a Maoist interpretation moulded to fit the Indian society. On this background Naxalite leaders try to mobilize lower castes, middle castes and tribal groups, encompassing professions ranging from peasants, sharecroppers, agricultural labourers, workers and others under the parole of forming a common class identity. What the narratives of informants will show is that this is a complicated matter.

3.4.5 Recognising Identity

Tarrow (1998:110) recognises that ordinary people often have their own readings of events that are different from those construed by leaders. Tarrow (1998:111-12) asserts that it is necessary for leaders of any social movement to frame or re-frame, employ selective cultural symbols and tap into emotions to mobilize people from passivity into collective action. Della Porta and Diani (2006:93) argue that it is through actions that feelings of belonging are either reinforced or weakened. The evolution of collective action produces and encourages continuous redefinitions of identity. Della Porta and Diani define identity as:

“...neither a thing one can own, nor a property of actors, but as the process through which individual and /or collective actors, in interaction with other social actors, attribute a specific meaning to their traits, their life occurrences, and the systems of social relations in which they are embedded” (2006:92).

The authors add that identity is simultaneously static and dynamic. It is static in the sense that it evokes continuity and solidarity of allegiances over time, which is an aspect that relates to both frame amplification and transformation. On the other hand identity is subject to redefinitions. Identities are forged and adapted in the course of conflict, and their boundaries can be modified in the

⁷⁰ Caste system.

process (Della Porta and Diani 2006:93). Secondly, individuals have multiple identities. Individuals may have feelings of belonging to several different collectivities. The definition of lines of solidarity and opposition are often blurred as older lines of identity may exist alongside new ones, generating tensions among actor's different self-perceptions. Tarrow (1998:119) emphasises how existing identities can constrain or vitalize social movements and how new ones may be formed in the process of contention through processes of frame alignment.

3.5 Summary

The theories that have been synthesized and integrated in this section will function as a general framework for contextualizing the findings in the analysis. Frame alignment processes address the strategies and actions movements employ for recruitment and sustenance of membership. Core framing tasks and frame resonance attend to the general discursive aspect and success or failure of interpretive frames. Networks, competing actors, repression, ideology and identity account for factors that may affect the success or failure of frame alignment processes over time. The next chapter will discuss methodologies.

4.0 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

The main focus of this research is the narratives of former members of Naxalite groups and individuals who, despite having alternative interpretive frames readily available, refrained from joining a Naxalite movement. The aim of the research is not to uncover causal factors, but to explore how interviewees framed their motivations for joining, leaving and staying out of the movement. The research design necessitated an exploratory and contextual understanding of the narratives of the interviewees, which entailed devising a broad range of methods in addition to interviews and using various types of data to contextualize findings. In anthropological research it is common to conduct long-term participant observation, as in ethnographic field research (Bryman

2004:266-268). Observations in the field were in my study, complimented by qualitative interviewing, informal conversations, and reliance on primary and secondary written and audiovisual sources due to time and security constraints.

The first part of this chapter describes the fieldwork methodologies of the research. The second part focuses on limitations; of using a translator, informant accuracy, fieldworker identity; veracity, objectivity and perspicacity⁷¹ and ethics. In the last section some challenges of conducting fieldwork in conflict zones will be discussed.

4.2 Fieldwork methodologies

I have relied on four methods of qualitative data gathering; in-depth semi-structured interviewing, informal conversations, field observations and analysis of secondary data. Interviewing and informal conversations serve as the primary data, supplemented by observation and secondary data. The secondary data consists of books, documents, reports, newspaper and journal articles, policy briefs, online statements and interviews posted on Naxalite blogs. The following section will depict how the field sites were identified, how access was gained, and the use of sample selection and challenges of handling secondary data.

4.2.1 Locating the Field

The decision to focus on the districts of Warangal and Khammam in northern Andhra Pradesh was based on two characteristics. The first is related to access and the other is related to relevance in terms of my research questions. Prior to my arrival in India, I had contacted researchers in Delhi and in Oslo that have written on topics related to Naxalism. I chose Warangal and Khammam districts because the contacts that I had could put me in touch with relevant informants in this area. By taking their advice and using contacts they forwarded, Andhra Pradesh was the area in which I was most likely to access

the informants that were relevant for my research. Andhra Pradesh has had a long history of Naxalite movements. After West-Bengal, where the movement was founded, it has been considered the “hub” of Naxal struggles. In the latter decade, the number of murders and arrests related to encounters between state forces and Naxalite cadres has decreased, making it a relatively safer place to conduct research than other states currently facing Naxalite activities. The districts of Warangal and Khammam border to Dantewada district in the neighbouring state of Chhattisgarh. This is an area that since 2005 has seen the outbreak of low intensity warfare. Consequently, a large population of internally displaced people have fled to Warangal and Khammam and these were the people I interviewed. The next section will specify and explain the various field sites chosen for this study.

4.2.2 Field Sites

I collected data at several sites during my fieldwork. These were the sites I conducted interviews:

a. Delhi: Here I conducted interviews with people specialised in the field, such as academics, human rights activists and former government employees from Delhi and Andhra Pradesh working on Naxalism. These interviews provided background information on the conflict. In addition I collected books and reports relevant for my research.

b. Hyderabad: Here I conducted interviews with activists, sympathizers and historians who had in-depth knowledge about the movements in this specific region. I also met journalists who had travelled to large parts of the region and reported on the conflict over a period of time. These informants later put me in contact with former members who had joined in the 1970s and eighties and left the movement a decade later, in Hyderabad and Warangal. This is the site where I recruited an assistant who could take me into Khammam and Warangal districts for the purpose of interviewing internally displaced people (IDPs).

⁷¹ A concept used in anthropology to measure the *degree of generalizability* in research, for details see section 4.3.4.

c. Khammam: I interviewed internally displaced people who refrained from joining the Naxalite movement, anti-Naxalite movements or government forces in Chhattisgarh, despite strong mobilisation and recruitment efforts I also had informal conversations with NGOs in the area and visited eight villages where internally displaced people had settled.

d. Warangal: I conducted interviews and had informal conversations with ex-members who had joined the movement in the 1990s. I also conducted interviews with tribal people spread over five villages. I visited a scholarly institution where a number of leaders were recruited into Naxalite groups in the 1970s to 1990s.

The primary data was gathered through interviews, informal conversations and observations at the various field sites in India. I conducted 24 interviews in total. These interviews, complimented by several informal conversations, represented the primary data. This is supplemented by reports, statements, policy briefs, newspaper and online articles, academic research and online interviews on Naxalite blogs, gathered both in India and Norway.

4.2.3 Access and Sampling

In order to interview and observe individuals, I had to devise access and sampling strategies. I employed what Alan Bryman describes as convenience and snowball sampling techniques. “A convenience sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility” (Bryman 2004:100). Prior to arrival in India I contacted as many potential informants and facilitators as I could, and subsequently met with these people when I arrived. These contacts were mainly researchers who had links to relevant informants or individuals who could put me in contact with informants. This is how the process of snowball sampling started. As described by Bryman (2004:100); “With this approach to sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others”. This is how I accessed former members of the movement. In one site I established the contacts to access other informants at other sites. This is also how I was able to recruit translators, which will be elaborated on in a later section. Due to my research design I

wanted to access people who had joined and left the movement in different periods. I also needed to access people who opted to stay out of the movement and not engaged in collective action on either side of the conflict. Individuals belonging to tribal groups composed a relevant sample, because these are currently the main target group for recruitment to the Naxalite movement, as well as to anti-Naxalite militias. Consequently the reasons for not joining a Naxalite or anti-Naxalite group can say something about the changes in frames provided by Naxal groups, local-anti Naxalite mobilizers and representatives of the state. People who actively facilitated my access to informants were academics and human rights activists who were perceptive of the purpose of my research and request for certain types of informants. However, time constraints made the process of finding relevant interviewees difficult for my helpers, as people in general are hesitant to disclose information about former membership in the movement because of the stigma it entails and possible political or legal repercussions. My facilitators spent a great deal of time persuading informants to agree to participate in interviewing. Some of these interviews took up to two weeks to set up. The following section will elaborate on the types of informants I interviewed.

4.2.4 Informants

Given that I devised strategies of convenience and snowball sampling, I had to rely on facilitators to provide potential informants for me to interview. This did not allow for much selection and I was limited to interviewing the few people I was able to access. The informants joined and left the movement at different times. Therefore their narratives will be divided into the decades of *1970s and 1980s*, *1990s* and *2000s*, which is the current decade. The actor's experiences will be contextualised according to the historical development of the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh and the gradual geographical shift towards Chhattisgarh, the latter state in which narratives of informants who refrained from joining draw their experiences. With informants joining in the 1970s and 1980s I was able to speak English. I was dependent on a translator when I interviewed informants who joined in the 1990s and during the interview

sessions with tribal people. The interviewees were both men and women. I will not discuss the implications of gender perspectives here, as it is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, further research exploring the gendered perspectives on participation in Naxalite movements would be an interesting topic to pursue as approximately forty percent of the current cadres in the movement are women. Another aspect is identity. The group joining in the earliest decades described themselves as Dalits. Informants joining in the following decade identified themselves as ‘Other Backward Castes’ (OBCs). Informants who refrained from membership in the Naxalite movement, were Gothi Koya⁷² and Koya⁷³ tribal people. They had fled from the war in the neighbouring state of Chhattisgarh and settled in the districts of Warangal and Khammam in Andhra Pradesh. Being a Dalit, OBC or tribal in India defines your social position in overall society and these identities are used differently in different contexts and by different people. They are dynamic, often over-lapping and differ and have changed over time. The categories also encompass class layers within them.

4.2.5 Triangulation and Challenges of Managing Secondary Data

As mentioned in the initial section on fieldwork methodologies, I have used a wide range of written secondary sources to contextualize and substantiate my findings, which may be termed “triangulation”. Bryman (2004:275) describes triangulation as “using more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon.”. Stewart (1998:28) notes that triangulation is important because no type of data or informant is error free. He says that “distinctive sources of information come equipped with distinctive biases and the ethnographer’s task is to design data collection strategies for superseding these biases, usually by finding additional sources with different biases”.

Elisabeth J. Wood (2003:32) has conducted extensive research on insurgent collective action and the civil war in El Salvador, and says that histories of civil wars are often recorded either by literate elite revolutionaries, through

⁷² This group is referred to as *Muria* in Hindi speaking Chhattisgarh.

governments or not at all. Although there is a vast literature⁷⁴ on the Naxalite movement and its activities, the movement as such has to a large extent remained under-theorized. This was emphasised by Routledge (1997:2168) in his article focusing on space, mobility and collective action. This article is exceptional in the literature on Naxalism in the sense that it refrains from focusing only on historical characteristics of the movement, or exclusively analysing the movement and its activities as ‘terrorism’. The latter description is common in the literature published on the web pages of think-tanks such as the South Asian Terrorism Portal⁷⁵, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies⁷⁶, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis⁷⁷ and Observer Research Foundation⁷⁸, which contribute to informing government policies. The discourse of Naxalites as ‘terrorists’ is prevalent in current policy briefs of the state governments of Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, as well as that of the central Indian government. Major newspapers and television channels often represent Naxalites and their activities in a manner that is sympathetic to the government view⁷⁹; that is the view of Naxalism as a major security threat. Several reports have been published from Human Rights Watch, National Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Forum and Campaign for Peace and Justice in Chhattisgarh that offer a more human rights oriented approach, focusing on the victims and people affected by the conflict. The two types of literature, human rights and security-oriented, tend to take conflicting positions in terms of their approach, descriptions and recommendations. Human rights activists are often dismissed by government officials as sympathizers of Naxalite ideology and apologizers of their activities. On the other hand human

⁷³ This group is referred to as *Dorla* in Hindi speaking Chhattisgarh.

⁷⁴ Literature focusing on the earlier phase of the movements has focused on historical characteristics; like that of Sankar Ghosh, (1974). “The Naxalite Movement: A Maoist Experiment”. Biplab Das Gupta (1974) “The Naxalite Movement”. Manoranjan Mohanty (1977) “Revolutionary Violence: A Study of the Maoist Movement in India”. Kalyan Mukherjee and Rajendra Singh Yadav (1980). “Bhojpur: Naxalism in the Plains of Bihar. Sumanta Banerjee (1984). “India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising”. Sumanta Banerjee (ed.) (1987). “Thema Book of Naxalite Poetry”. Shanta Sinha (1989). “Maoists in Andhra Pradesh”.

⁷⁵ For more information, please visit: www.satp.org

⁷⁶ For more information, please visit: www.ipcs.org

⁷⁷ For more information, please visit: www.idsa.in

⁷⁸ For more information, please visit: www.observerindia.com

⁷⁹ By this I mean both the central and state governments.

rights activists accuse governments of failing to protect civilians and not implementing appropriate reforms and development projects to eliminate the structural conditions that facilitate the movement's existence. My data on state governments' framing and actions towards Naxalite groups is drawn from these secondary sources, which has necessitated a highly critical and triangulative approach.

4.2.6 Exploratory Approach

Naxalite groups operate differently depending on the areas they operate within. Their composition and activities are adapted to the socio-economic patterns and caste/tribal populations in each region and district, and changes over time in the overall environment and according to state responses. This also makes it difficult to generalize about the movement as a whole. George J. Kunnath, Alpha Shah, Bela Bhatia and Shashi B. Singh have conducted excellent anthropological research on Naxalite factions in Bihar and Jharkhand respectively. However, the latest research on Andhra Pradesh which refrained from a security studies approach was published in 1989.⁸⁰ Because activities of the movement are localized, it necessitates localized research that can provide a more nuanced perspective and include the actors' perspectives. Due to the knowledge gap in the above mentioned literature, my research became exploratory in nature, especially in its analytical approach to understanding actors' framing of joining, leaving and refraining from participation in Naxalite groups. This necessitated a great degree of triangulation in the available literature, to make the jigsaw puzzle of tracing and contextualizing framing over time come together. The next section will elaborate on the details of the various methods employed for data gathering.

4.2.7 Interviewing and Informal Conversations

⁸⁰ In the latter years there have been articles theorizing the caste dimension and rebel economy of Naxalite movements in Bihar and Jharkhand: George J. Kunnath (2006). "Becoming a Naxalite in Bihar", and Alpha Shah (2006). "Markets of Protection: The 'Terrorist' Maoist Movement and the State in Jharkhand, India". Bela Bhatia (2005). "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar". Bela Bhatia

During fieldwork I made use of semi-structured and unstructured interviewing. Interviews were in-depth, lasting between one and three hours and open-ended in nature. I developed a general interview guide in which I had a set of five to ten questions I wanted to have answered.⁸¹ I used semi-structured interviewing when interacting with researchers at think tanks, human rights activists and historians. Because each had their separate area of expertise, I had to adopt different interview guides for each individual. The interview guides were not detailed, they merely contained specific questions that I wanted interviewees to answer, and from there follow-up questions came naturally. Bernard (2006:213) argues that; “when you want to know about the lived experience of fellow human beings – you just can’t beat unstructured interviewing”. Bernard (2006:213) also points to another aspect; unstructured interviewing is more appropriate in a context where informants are encouraged to share life experiences but may feel uncomfortable with formal settings. I engaged in unstructured interviewing when I collected the narratives that were the basis for my analysis. During most of my interviews I used a tape recorder and combined this with note-taking. Academics, human rights activists and historians did not mind having interviews taped. In a few cases, informants did not want me to take notes or use a tape recorder; in these cases I respected their decisions. In interview sessions with former members who spoke English I engaged in informal conversation prior to turning on the tape recorder. I explained that they could turn the tape recorder off at any time and if they wanted me to erase certain sections, I would do so after the session was done. I had the chance to following up these interviews in three cases, by conducting phone interviews after my return to Norway. Two of these interviews were with former members and one with a historian and sympathizer of the movement.

4.2.8 Participant Observation

(2000). “The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar”, PhD thesis, University of Cambridge. Shashi B. Singh (2005). “Limits to Power: Naxalism and Caste Relations in a South Bihar Village”.

⁸¹ These are attached in Appendixes 1.1 and 1.2.

Although I was not able to stay long enough to learn the language and get immersed in village life and culture, I engaged to a great extent in participant observation. Bernard (2006:344) contends that participant observation can be the collection of any qualitative data ranging from photographs, audio recordings, hearing folktales, video-recordings and open-ended interviews. It also entails observation of daily life. Simultaneous to formal interview sessions, I engaged in informal interviewing and conversations. This was a method I applied through all my fieldwork. It is a demanding method in the sense that it requires writing down daily your observations and remembering important conversations (Bernard 2006:211).

I travelled through several villages across the districts of Khammam and Warangal. This enabled me to observe living conditions, environmental settings in which people lived, and everyday social interaction. Employing a method of participant observation enables you to collect first-hand data relevant for the purpose of answering your research question (Bernard 2006:344). The limit of relying solely on this method is contextual misunderstanding (Stewart 1998:19). With limited time and lack of extensive prior knowledge of Indian culture and languages, making sense of observations may be a challenge. This is why I have chosen to use observation in this study as supplementary to interviews and written sources.

4.2.9 Language and Translation

During fieldwork I was located in Delhi and in Andhra Pradesh. In Delhi people speak mostly Hindi and in Andhra Pradesh Telugu is the official language. When I interacted with ‘experts’ and academics, language was not an obstacle to communication as these interviewees were fluent in English. Due to time constraints I was not able to learn Hindi or Telugu, and therefore I was dependent on translation in situations where the interviewees did not speak English, particularly in the districts of Warangal and Khammam. When interviewing tribal people in Khammam and Warangal, I was dependent on the informants speaking either Telugu or Hindi. In some cases the informants

spoke neither and interviews had to be translated from their local *Koya* or *Gond* languages, via Hindi or Telugu to English. Thus sometimes two translators were needed, as finding someone with the competency to translate from a local tribal language to English proved to be almost impossible. The implications of the use of translators will be discussed in the section below.

4.3 Limitations

Due to constraints of limited time and funding imposed in the master programme, I was only able to conduct fieldwork for seven and a half weeks. This short time span had several implications. Firstly, it limited the access of more former members of the movement. Secondly, it was counterproductive in establishing relationships of trust with informants. Thirdly, it limited the degree of choice of informants. These three factors raise questions about the generalizability of the study, as the identity background of groups differ and are not the same for each time period. The ideal situation would have been to conduct long-term research and recruiting sample groups with similar identity backgrounds in each of the time periods. Lastly, limited time hampered the process of finding skilled interpreters that understood the objectives of my research and had experience with literal translation. All of these factors influenced the type of data I was able to collect and the degree of validity, which will be elaborated in the section subsequent to translation. To compensate for the above mentioned limitations, I will make use of extensive triangulation in the literature and develop a framework which enables me to interpret the concrete experiences which informants see as significant for joining, leaving or refraining from membership in the Naxalite movement.

4.3.1 Translation

During the interviews with former cadres of the Maoist movements in Warangal and IDPs in Khammam, I was dependent on a translator, and in some cases two translators. Today there are many researchers who conduct fieldwork and interviews in locations where they do not know the local language. In such settings professional translators might not be readily available, and the only

option is to find someone from the area to act as an interpreter. I was not able to train these translators due to limited time and resources, but I was fortunate in finding a professor and an MA student in Hyderabad who acted as interpreters on different occasions. My two major concerns with using translators were firstly how well and accurately they translated my questions and responses from informants; in particular in the cases where informants' narratives were translated to Hindi or Telugu prior to English. Secondly, how their background and social status could impact on my relation to informants. During the interview session I also found that a challenging aspect was not being able to control the questions and statements the interpreter asked and said. In some cases the translator did not translate literally. The translator would most of the time translate with "she or he said that". This element is visible in the analysis section, where I draw on excerpts from interviews to sustain my arguments. Harpviken (2006:106) argues that some words are indeed impossible to translate directly into another language. Language is embedded with cultural symbols that are sometimes expressed through metaphors that are unfamiliar to the researcher.

4.3.2 Informant Accuracy and Representation

Bernard (2006:246) argues that people are inaccurate reporters of their own behaviour. The author lists several reasons for this; firstly, once people have agreed to be interviewed they will have personal stakes in the process. They will try answering all your questions, whether they understand the objectives or not. Secondly, human memory is fragile; some things are easier to remember than others. Thirdly, interviews are social encounters and people will manipulate those encounters to their advantage. In relation to my interviewees I found it hard for them to be exact when it came to describing when an event took place. If there was a massacre or a rally of significant size that had taken place I could usually cross-check with other sources to see if it took place around the time informants claimed it did. Accounts of ex-members who joined in the late 1970s and early 1980s may be more inaccurate than those of informants in the later and current periods, due to the longer time perspective.

Informants' narratives must be understood in relation to their socio-cultural background and that they all had intentions of representing themselves, the movement and other actors in a manner which would reflect positively on them. Interviews are social encounters and people will manipulate those to their advantage. This type of interaction may also be termed impression management, as informants' behaviour can be seen as a combination of managing impressions and assessing costs and benefits by disclosing certain types of information (Goffman 1959). Manipulation of the interview setting is not limited to that of informants. The next section will highlight the implications of researcher identity.

4.3.3 Fieldwork Identity and Subjectivity

Coffey (1999:57) contends that our own sense of personhood; age, race, gender, class, history and sexuality engages with the personalities, histories and subjectivities of others present in the field. Our subjective personality is thus a part of fieldwork and is negotiated within the field. Furthermore, Robben (2007:63) notes that an ethnographer's multiple and dynamic identities may be liabilities as well as assets; "Anthropologists may use their gender, sexual orientation, skin colour, physical skills, nationality, age, marital status, parenthood and self to obtain data that are unavailable to those with different personal assets". In terms of gender identity I assumed I would have an advantage when interacting with female informants. As Powdermaker (Robben 2007:60) argues, female anthropologists seem to have easier access to both sexes than male anthropologists, whose contact with women may be regarded as threatening. As a female in the field I did feel more warmly welcomed by other women than by men. Nonetheless, I question my gender advantage in the sense that I used male interpreters, which I suspect countered the level of trust I could have achieved by virtue of being a woman. My appearance as white and young, in addition to being a female did have an impact when meeting people. I did stand out and attract attention despite my best efforts to dress traditionally and appropriately in different settings. In addition to wearing the traditional

Kurta⁸², Salwaar⁸³, shawl and simple sandals on an everyday basis, I picked up on simple greetings and phrases to make sure I was polite towards people and could navigate to some extent on my own. Greetings and words often functioned as "ice-breakers" in interview settings. Unfortunately it was difficult to move around in rural areas without attracting attention from men in particular. To avoid awkward situations I would tell men who approached me that I was married and thus I was immediately treated with respect. When I conducted interviews with directors and people pertaining higher positions I would dress more formally, wearing a silk Kurta, dark pants and shoes. Our subjective personality and background also determines how we interpret data and social interaction during fieldwork. Rubin & Rubin (1995:21) claim that in naturalist⁸⁴ research the researchers themselves become the data-gathering instrument, whose skills in listening, observing and understanding are crucial. Robben (2007:176) argues that the relation between the ethnographer and informant is one of counter-transferential nature and dissonance of personalities that generate certain "skin feelings" on the part of the ethnographer. These skin feelings may range from irritation to empathy and they may only be neutralized by awareness. During fieldwork I frequently met people who stirred emotions ranging from anger to utmost sympathy. I have tried to avoid these feelings clouding my description of the informants' narratives. Yet, the interpretations and conclusions set forward are a product of my subjective experiences as a researcher in a particular field setting and through interaction with particular informants. The following section discusses strategies employed in securing veracity, objectivity and perspicacity during the research process, which is analogous of managing subjectivity in relation to data.

4.3.4 Veracity, Objectivity and Perspicacity

Instead of applying and discussing the concepts of validity, reliability and generalizability, I have chosen to use Alex Stewarts' concepts of veracity,

⁸² Traditional long thin dress/sweater.

⁸³ Traditional wide pants that compliments the Kurta.

⁸⁴ This is what anthropologists term ethnographic research.

objectivity and perspicacity. These are more compatible with an anthropological approach to research. By veracity, Stewart (1998:19) means the reflection of reality understood in a holistic manner, contextualized in a web of a set of claims. Stewart (1998:18-20) argues that the longer time spent in the field enhances the veracity of an ethnographic study. In my case I have tried compensating for lack of time by devising a method of triangulation, which Stewart (1998:29) also recognises as an important tool for increasing veracity. Because my research design was aimed at focusing on narratives collected in a conflict zone, I argue that the necessity and feasibility of extensive fieldwork was not pertinent to my research design. Nonetheless, I do recognize that more time in the field could have increased the accuracy and contextual understanding of the narratives I collected. Stewart (1998:33) states that objectivity is but one dimension of the concept of reliability, which is often applied in quantitative research. The author divides objectivity into three sub-constructs; *bias*; the effect of researcher or interactional peculiarities on results specification and replication, *specification*; definition of research circumstances, so that bias can be judged and replication attempted, and *replication*; reproduction of identical results by other researchers. Stewart contends that the latter aspect is impossible in anthropological research because of the difficulties in interpreting other people's field notes and context and time in which they were gathered. Stewart (1998:33-4) lists a range of tactics in coping with limits to objectivity. I will only include those I find relevant to my research as the short time frame and restricted resources, limited the tactics available. I have tried limiting bias by using a coping tactic of accounting for the network of contacts and informants, as well as the processes through which I collected my data. Veracity and objectivity are intimately linked to perspicacity. Stewart (1998:47) describes perspicacity as the capacity to produce applicable insight. This entails specifying the underlying forms of interaction, processes, structures and meanings, and subsequently establishing theoretically the domain in which these apply. I have synthesised three different theoretical frameworks to contextualize and specify my findings, as well as triangulating all written sources available on the subject to

contextualize the narratives of informants. Because the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh and the actors' perspectives largely remains under-theorized, my research attempts to offer theoretical insight for understanding the already existing literature in addition to the data I gathered in the field. This manner of applying insight is analogous to external validity in other social science research disciplines.

4.3.5 Ethical Considerations and Data Handling

According to the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association, an anthropologist must do “everything in his or her power to protect the physical, social and psychological welfare and to honour the dignity and privacy of those studied” (AAA 2000b:1 in (Kovats-Bernat 2002:7)). The interviewees were informed about the purpose and objectives of my research. I asked for their consent in using a tape recorder. For me it was a great advantage to use one, as English translations were sometimes difficult. By taping the interview I could listen several times and get the correct transcription. Most informants did not mind being taped. By taping their narratives I automatically became responsible to handle this data with absolute confidentiality and discretion. If this data had come into the hands of either the police or Naxalite groups, it could have been potentially harmful for my informants. This necessitated a careful and covert handling of this data at all times, issues which Kovats-Bernat (2002) and Sluka (1995) struggled with during their fieldwork. I would save interviews and field-notes on my laptop and memory stick, and send these to my e-mail account and later erase them from the computer which was protected with a password. I would keep the Dictaphone and memory stick hidden beneath my clothes at all times. Due to the sensitive information several informants disclosed in the interviews I had no desire to know their names. In some cases the English speaking informants said their names and in some cases my translator asked without my consent. Consequently, the names of former members that appear in the thesis are fictive and have been altered for the protection and safety of my informants.

4.4 The Dangerous Field

In a “dangerous field”, social relationships and cultural realities are critically modified by pervasion of fear, threat of force and (ir) regular application of violence. This poses challenges to customary approaches to research, methods and ethics of anthropological fieldwork (Kovats-Bernat 2002:1-2). Presupposed ideal circumstances for interacting with informants, like stability, trust, security and freedom from fear, and an ethnographer’s position of control may be altered in conflict situations which consequently renders interaction with informants as not always ideal. As a researcher this had implications for the type of data I was able to gather. In a conflict situation several actors have emotional stakes in the ongoing conflict. This affects the type of information people share and how they communicate this information. Although informants never expressed verbally that they feared retaliation or accusations from either government forces or Naxalite factions, I felt that they thought carefully about what they said. This is closely related to the aspect of representation. The informants were interested in representing themselves and their stories in way that minimized the risk of disclosing information. This can also be interpreted as risk calculation. The aspect of risk calculation does not only relate to informants, this type of calculation is also done by researchers.

Kovats-Bernat (2002:6) holds that on a practical level anthropologists are always forced to calculate risks involved with collecting a certain type of data, both for the anthropologist and the participant informants. This calculation of risk however, will always be subjective and personal. “Work in dangerous fields implies an ability to negotiate daily a spectrum of social encounters with a diverse host of individuals, some of whom may be helpful, some of whom may be dangerous, and some of whom may be simply indifferent” (Kovats-Bernat 2002:6). It would have been unsafe for me to accept the offers to enter into Naxalite guerrilla zones. This was nevertheless my subjective calculation, other researchers may have calculated otherwise. The calculation of risk on my part was also related to being a woman and not knowing the language, which was discussed in a previous section. A male enjoys more respect on a general

basis in the Indian society and thus more freedom in moving around independently. I did feel limited as a female to move around in the rural areas. However, I might have recalculated this risk had I known the local language. From past experiences in periods of living abroad and conducting smaller fieldworks knowing the local language renders more freedom in communication and a greater understanding of cultural codes, which to some extent gives you a sensation of safety. The negotiation and evaluation of risk are, in my experience, best dealt with through an approach which tries to integrate the researcher's skills and knowledge in research, ability to observe his or her surroundings, skills in asking the right questions, ability to manage stress, and last but not least, his or her own gut feeling.

4.4.1 Hazards, Polarization and Suspicion

Nancy Howell's (2007:234-244) article on the human hazards of fieldwork points to several types of hazards anthropologists face in the field. This ranges from rape, robberies, assaults, illnesses and killings. In a conflict setting such hazards may increase. Sluka (1995:287) argues that; "When conducting research based on participant observation in communities involved in political conflicts, it is generally the case that no 'neutrals' are allowed". In the field where I conducted my research I felt a degree of polarization among the various types of informants. Security studies analysts from IDSA⁸⁵, SATP⁸⁶ and the Observer Research Foundation viewed Naxalite movements as military machines employing terrorist actions and coercive strategies to gain people's support. Human rights activist on the other hand would acknowledge the legitimacy in the demands set forward by the movement and that some people joined because it is a better alternative than remaining in their current life situation. These activists would condemn the violent actions by both sides in the conflict. Former members would probe into my opinion about the movement, towards which I responded that my aim was not to depict the rights and wrongs, but merely their perspectives. As an extension of this probing I

⁸⁵ Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis.

was accused of being a spy in one encounter. This type of accusation is not uncommon for anthropologists during fieldwork. Frøystad (2000:74-5) had a similar experience during her fieldwork in India. During a visit to a former member, I was accused of being a spy for the government, seeking information about her and the Naxalite movement. I had gained access to this informant via a professor and had come from a meeting with another former member prior to this visit. I had not experienced similar accusations there, so I was taken by surprise. I immediately put away my Dictaphone, notebook and pen. I tried explaining that I was not a spy and repeated the intentions of my visit. I said that they could ask me any questions they liked if that would make them more certain of the fact that I was not a spy. They followed this up and asked questions about my family, background and country. Yet, they were not convinced. They asked if we had a similar movement in Norway. I said we did not, as the context is different. I mentioned I used to be a passive member of the socialist youth party in Norway some years ago. Immediately the atmosphere changed. The former member and her family shared their stories, nonetheless insisting I could not take notes or use a recorder during the interview.

4.5 Summary

In order to understand the narratives of informants it is important to keep in mind their background and in which context the information was collected. The Naxalite struggle is ongoing and all the narratives were collected relatively close to where the conflict is most intense at the moment, Dantewada in Chhattisgarh. To ensure the security of my informants and myself, there was a limit to the type and extent of information I was able to collect. Nonetheless, the narratives in the subsequent analysis section offer important insight into the personal experiences of membership and reasons for not engaging in radical collective action in the Naxalite movement.

⁸⁶ South Asian Terrorism Portal.

5.0 DATA AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The first part of the analysis will focus on the frame alignment strategies Naxalite groups employed in attracting members, and how the potential adherents experienced them. This section also addresses the failures of such processes in relation to why people left or refrained from membership. The last section will discuss frame resonance, competing frames, repressive structures and address the shifts in framing over time at both at the government, movement and individual level.

5.1.1 The Master Frame

Naxalite movements all follow the ideological master frame of the original Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) that revolted in the village of Naxalbari in West-Bengal under the leadership of Charu Majumdar. Routledge (1997:2174) argues that the Naxalite analysis was centred on the characterization of the Indian state as semi-feudal and semi-colonial. As stated an excerpt from the political resolution of the CPI (ML) party in 1969:

“the increasing concentration of land in the hands of a few landlords, the expropriation of almost total surplus produced by the toiling peasantry in the form of rent, the complete landlessness of about 40 percent of the rural population, the back-breaking usurious exploitation, the ever growing evictions of the poor peasantry coupled with the brutal social oppression – including lynching of ‘harijans’ reminiscent of the middle ages – and the complete backwardness of the technique of production clearly demonstrates the semi-feudal character of our society” (Routledge 1997:2174).

The stated goal of Majumdar’s supporters was armed agrarian revolution with the objective of seizing control of the state. They believed Mao Tse-tung was a leader of the world revolution, that a revolutionary situation existed all over India, that an area-wide seizure of power was the path towards Indian revolution and that guerrilla warfare was the only mode through which development and advancement of revolution was possible (Routledge 1997:2174).

A characteristic of communist movements is according to Snow et al. (1986: 477) that frame transformation precedes frame bridging, amplification and extension, rendering the latter three processes complimentary to sustaining frame transformation. This is important to keep in mind when reading the analysis section. Naxalite groups following Charu Majumdar's mass line have agreed upon who is to blame for the injustices in India, the government of India. This is what Benford and Snow (2000:615-16) term a diagnostic assessment of causality. The literature suggests that there have been disagreements about the prognostic framing of a proposed solution to the problem. Consequently, groups have opposed each other in terms of a motivational call for ameliorative actions. Internal conflicts on prognostic and motivational framing were a contributory factor to fissures, mergers and extinction of many Naxalite groups in Andhra Pradesh⁸⁷.

The first part of the analysis will focus on the strategy processes of frame alignment that were significant for becoming members of a Naxalite group and in the end leave the movement they were a part of. Subsequently I will look at explanations for why people did not join the Naxalite movement. Lastly, the aspect of frame resonance, competing actors, repression, ideology and identity will be discussed.

5.2 Explanatory Factors

In May 2006, the Planning Commission of the Government of India set up an Expert Group on "Development Issues to deal with the causes of Discontent, Unrest and Extremism" (2008:44-55). The Expert Group consisted of 16 members with specializations in the areas of development, agriculture, law and human rights.⁸⁸ The report lists several reasons for why people join Naxalite groups, defining them as causal factors rooted in discontent. Although the aim

⁸⁷ For a complete list of radical communist movements in India since the 1960s, please visit www.massline.info/india/indian_Groups.htm.

⁸⁸ The first drafts and the final report was written and completed by Dr. Bela Bhatia and Sri. K. Balagopal. Dr. Bela Bhatia is a prominent researcher in anthropology and development studies. K.

of this research is not to uncover causal factors, but rather focus on the framing of why people join, leave and stay out, this report does highlight the great variety of possible causal factors. A range of causal factors may render a vast mixture of personal interpretive frames, but they may also be dependent on whether the causal factors fit under a single frame or not. The Expert Group (2008) argues that the causes for why people have joined vary depending on the social, economic and cultural background of an area. The intensity of unrest is a response to unresolved social and economic problems over a long period of time. The report emphasises that the strategies and organisation of a Naxalite group varies in regards to the extent of mobilisation of people, types of actions people engage in and the role of underground cadres. The report asserts that mass participation in militant protest has been a characteristic of Naxalite mobilisation. The Expert Group points to several reasons why people join; the first is related to land, particularly government lands and forest lands. Naxalite groups have succeeded in assisting occupation by the landless lower castes and Adivasis respectively. Secondly, Naxalites have supported, in the form of protests and rallies, forest-dwelling Adivasis who have been displaced by the government for the purpose of constructing irrigation, mining or industrial projects.⁸⁹ Thirdly, landlessness, poverty and social oppression are also causes of displacement. The report states that these people often seek assistance from Naxalites to put an end to harassment by forest officials and police. Fourthly, victims of caste discrimination and targets of high caste militias⁹⁰, commonly Dalits and other lower castes, have looked to Naxalite groups for protection when the police have been unresponsive. Fifth, in areas where The Minimum Wages Act⁹¹ has not been adequately enforced, Naxalites have ensured payment of decent wage rates. They have also ensured minimum monetary compensation for self- employed non-agricultural labourers and certain

Balagopal is a prominent human rights activist and lawyer based in Hyderabad. I engaged in informal conversations and interviewing with both during fieldwork.

⁸⁹ Menon and Nigam (2007:62-3) claim that five hundred thousand people have been displaced each year since Independence, primarily as a consequence of state acquisition of land for the purpose of such projects.

⁹⁰ These are called *Senas* in Hindi.

produce.⁹² In addition Naxalites have enforced the protection of common property resources, like those of cattle-herds, fishing communities, toddy toppers and stone workers where these groups have become vulnerable due to the appropriation of such resources by dominant segments of society. Naxalite groups have been persistent in their fight against social oppression of Dalits and OBCs. They have not only resolved individual issues, but also built confidence among the oppressed groups to demand respect and dignity from higher castes and classes. This entailed the sanctioning of practices of untouchability Dalits were subject to.⁹³ Naxalites fought humiliation and exploitation of women in Dalit communities by upper caste men. They also protested forced labour practices⁹⁴. These latter three areas of protest were a particular characteristic of the Telangana district in Andhra Pradesh (Expert Group 2008:51). The report also points to the lack of confidence the marginalised groups of society have in the police. The Naxalites have taken up the security and justice of these sections as a serious concern. Lastly, the fact that poor villagers of lower castes and tribes collectively displayed such strength also impacted the minds of other lower castes in a positive manner. The strength of wielding power over higher castes and classes in society through collective action in the movement, gave a sense of empowerment to the oppressed classes. The report states that all these factors have been significant for why people chose to support and join the Naxalite movement.

I will focus on how some motivations for joining are framed by ex-members and see this aspect from an analytical standpoint. By applying a theory of frame alignment and examining narratives of informants, I will uncover the micromobilization processes at play to attract potential adherents to the

⁹¹ For more information on this Act, please visit:

http://labour.delhigovt.nic.in/act/details_acts/minimum_wages_act_1948/minimum_wages/intro.html

⁹² In Andhra Pradesh the increase of payment for Tendu leaves (patta) was raised to fifty times of what contractors paid tribals, due to the intervention of Naxalites.

⁹³ Some of these practices were wearing clean clothes and footwear in the presence of upper castes or when passing by their localities. Naxalites also encouraged Dalits not to address upper castes as Doras or Maliks. For more information on various types of untouchability practices in general, please visit: <http://www.ncdhr.org.in/ncdhr/general-info-misc-pages/wadwiu>.

⁹⁴ These are in termed *Begari* or *Vetti Chakri* in Hindi.

movement. The actors' narratives can by no means be taken as a general representation of how people frame their motivations for joining. Given that I am only focusing on one small area, and my informants related to three Naxalite groups, the CPI (ML) People's War and CPI (ML) Janashakti and the CPI (M), my ability to generalize is limited. In this regard this thesis should be treated as an exploratory study demanding greater analytical attention in future research.

5.3 The Framing of Joining

5.3.1 1970s and 1980s

K. Balagopal (2006:3183) asserts that there was a clear period in the late 1970s and early 1980s where mass organisations, mainly agricultural labourers associations, student and youth movements, became the instrument for the spread of Maoism as an ideology and political practice.⁹⁵ After the state of emergency, the CPI (ML) movements in Andhra Pradesh flourished and entered a phase where mass mobilisation and protest against landlord oppression, practices of bonded labour and redistribution of land was their main focus. Balagopal (2006:3183) argues that it was the first time common people experienced some form of justice, as Naxalite movements proclaimed that people should not accept unrighteousness with no resistance. Srinivasulu (2002:19-20) notes that radical student and youth organisations essential in spreading the message of the agrarian revolution through their 'Go to the Villages' campaigns during the summers.

Organisational Level

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Naxalite movements linked themselves with several other social movements, so called 'front' organisations dealing with issues ranging from students concerns, women's organisations, agricultural labour organisations and trade unions. In the case of informants joining in this early period they joined via student organisations at their school institution.

Two informants joined at the end of the 1970s, and two others joined in the beginning of the 1980s. Here is an excerpt from one interview describing the process of recruitment into the Radical Student Organisations in Andhra Pradesh:

“I was in the 10th standard and I was living in a Student Welfare Hostel in Rangareddy district. We were facing problems with food and hygiene. We were not given proper food or oil for cooking. There were insects on the food and there were waste problems. We were all hungry and very angry. We did not have our parents or family there. We started questioning our warden and we complained to the social welfare officer. There were only Dalits living there and we were angry because we were not treated as humans and we had to eat bad food. So we protested, but peacefully. This protest reached the newspaper. After that we were contacted by the Progressive Democratic Student Union and they joined us in the struggle, they showed solidarity and continued questioning the warden and social officer. Then I joined the student organisation” (Revati 2008:[telephone interview]).

In Revati's case there was an element of frame bridging on the organisational level that facilitated her initial membership in a radical student organisation. The front organisations functioned as the mediatory connection between individuals and Naxalite movements at large. Bridging as a strategy is effected by the ability to diffuse information through interpersonal or intergroup networks. At the micromobilization level social movements may scope out a number of potential adherents and subsequently bring these into the social movement infrastructure by working through their preferential information networks. Revati's narrative depicts this very aspect. It was the Radical Student Union that scoped out her group of Dalit students that were fighting for their rights, after having read about them in the newspaper.

Interpersonal level

Frame bridging not only takes place on an organisational level, but also by linking interpretive frames to the unmobilized sentiments of people who share the same views or grievances. This means that a movement must be successful in bridging actors' opinions and preferences on an interpersonal level. One

⁹⁵ This is also sustained by K. Srinivasulu (2002:20), Venugopal (2008: interview) and Varavara Rao (2008: interview).

informant's narrative depicts the degree of relevance and attraction he felt in relation to the leftist ideology:

“...even right from the beginning people like me and the people from Dalit community and most of the students were influenced and attracted by the left movement. Because we could see the discrimination by the lecturers and by the core students....when they [left movement] was talking about some issue, it was also talking about me. The issues were similar; they were common in my life. It was difficult for me to separate myself from the community. The community as a whole is the oppressor, and not the Dalit community. There was no other option except to work. To better the situation for myself, I had to better the situation for the community also” (Rajesh 2008:[interview]).

The latter two excerpts from the interviews depict the influential power of networks for joining in a social movement as well. Della Porta and Diani (2006:115-118) contend that networks of kinship and friends are important factors determining participation in a social movement and people tend to join and leave movements in clusters. Snow et al. (1986:478) underline that such networks may assume the function of micromobilization tasks. According to one of my informants:

“At that time there was great momentum for the left movement. You had to join a movement. I believe there were three options, either you join a BJP type movement, the left movement or remain on the outside as a lymphanized character, like a person that doesn't care about anything. Like the upper class and caste people” (Rajesh 2008:interview A).

This aspect also highlights the general ambiance in which people joined at the time. The political opportunity structure and the momentum and accessibility of front organisations facilitated in joining the movement. The informants who identified with the Marxist rhetoric decided to join.

Diffusing and Adapting the Master Frame

In this early period the informants joined in a front organisation by virtue of being students. They remained in the student organisations for several years prior to becoming what they termed a ‘full-timer’. This depicts the Naxalite movement's capacity of diffusing a Marxist-Leninist ideology via radical students organisations in which informants joined. It was via front organisations members became more familiar with various aspects of Marxist-

Leninist ideology. The process of becoming a ‘full-timer’ was by some informants described as one of learning and studying concepts:

“So the period from 1987 to 1998 was my experience. Before that, from 1982 to 1987 was preparation....to dream and to get in touch with the movement and community, and suppression, oppression, exploitation and words and theories behind the terminology and class perspective. That was the initial stage. Then I joined the student movement, then I did the writers thing, reading books, studying concepts, building concepts and articulating things” (Rajesh 2008:[interview]).

This process was by one informant depicted as becoming ‘mature’, as opposed to ‘immature’;

“People must go as ‘mature’, they must study first and gain knowledge, and then they can join. They can not join when they are young and if they have not studied. Then they will be immature”(Revati 2008:[telephone interview]).

What these two narratives portray is a process of accumulating knowledge. This aspect illustrates that front organisations to a large extent functioned as capacity building arenas, in which students became familiarized with Marxist concepts and built self-confidence. Via front organisations Naxalite groups were able to diffuse their master frame of fighting feudalism and imperialism and encouraging people to partake in an agricultural revolution, but on their own terms and by virtue of being students.

Micromobilization Actions

All the informants had participated in the ‘Go to the Village’ campaign and organized around what they described as ‘tribal issues’ in villages. N. Venugopal (2008:[interview]) notes that rural people joining Naxalite groups in large numbers began in the late 1970s:

“They had a program called “Go to Villages.” The students of the Radical Student’s Union and youth members of Radical Youth League, used to form into groups of 7 to 8 members. They used to go to villages, sing songs, give speeches and organize people on their local issues, and if possible form a local organization. In 1978-1979 this took place and newspapers also wrote about it. This used to take place in the summertime. Each summer they visited at least to 10 to 11,000 villages. Andhra has 27,000 villages. So in 3 summers they covered our entire state. That is how they, in their “Go To Village” campaigns, they recruited people. The standing order was that in any village you visit, you go to the Dalit Colony first. Meet poorest of the poor first” (Venugopal 2008:[interview]).

Revati's parents were bonded labourers, which may explain a feeling of solidarity with poor tribals, and what Snow et al. term "a moral obligation towards one's group", which is an objective for social movements to provoke when they employ a strategy of belief amplification. Nonetheless, it was not until Revati and her co-students joined the Radical Student Union that she attained a consciousness about being what she describes as 'downtrodden':

"We started thinking from that moment on about the downtrodden people. We were downtrodden to, and we began questioning the rights for us. I participated in the 'Go to Village Campaign' and we helped with agricultural work and issues. In the movement there were songs also. I was attracted to these songs. When we went to the villages we sang songs"(Revati 2008:[telephone interview]).

On a micromobilization level the political ideology and propaganda of the Naxalite movements were mediated through poems, songs and ballads of peasant folk traditions (Routledge 1997:2177). In the documentary 'Blazing Trail' made by the CPI (ML) People's War (2007), they emphasise the use of songs, poems and dance to invigorate the masses and make people join hands in the fight for a new people's democracy.⁹⁶ In the post-emergency period Naxalite movements stressed the use of cultural programmes in which the message of revolution was spread through performances during mass rallies and meetings. Revati and Rajesh both recalled moments of singing during village campaigns. Revati said it was one of the things that attracted her to the movement; "There would be singing. I remember I liked the songs. It was a good time" (Revati 2008:[telephone interview]).

Extending Solidarity

Suneel had experienced the death of his uncle and said it was an inspiration for joining:

"My family was a communist family basically. Our uncle fought against the upper caste landlords. He was killed in 1963. He was killed by landlords in my village, which was the inspiration for me. I finished my SSLC 10th standard in 1977. Then I got the idea to start entering into this politics. We should have a fight against the landlords. I worked as an activist from 1977 to 1988. In that ten years I started from a

⁹⁶ To view of this documentary, please visit: <http://indianmaoist.blogspot.com/2007/05/awe-inspiring-video-documentary-from.html>.

student activist, then I entered as a party organizer in tribal areas” (Suneel 2008:[interview]).

Nonetheless, his familiarity with landlord oppression, caste discrimination and village protests growing up may have eased his transition in participating in campaigns fighting for tribal rights while he was a student. The student organisations engaged in a campaign in which they extended solidarity with Dalits and tribals, as the empirical examples above depict. For feelings of solidarity and sensation of appropriateness of protesting against injustice, Naxalite groups, via student organisations, were successful in moulding their interpretive frame to fit the preference network and views of the students.

Local Issues

The method of working through the preferential networks of potential members, may explain how the movement was able to gain support. Through participation in village campaigns informants organized other groups on issues important to them. Naxalite groups were able to recruit via their front organisations, and this was largely contingent on their success in taking up local issues. Dr. Ajai Sahni (2008:[interview]) contends that:

“The narrative and doctrine of the Naxalite movement factions are extremely sophisticated. Before the factions enter any prospective area they conduct social and economic surveys that are elaborate and of eminent quality.⁹⁷ They break down the areas they are looking at. It is a village to village survey and extremely detailed. They take each village population; break it down to number of people, number of families, nature of land holdings, of landless labourers or workers, the nature of work, economic class, social class and caste. Then they plot the pattern of earnings over the proceeding years, and examine where the earnings decline. Then they plot the prices of principle crops in the area, coffee, cardamom, and maraca nut, and others, whatever the crop is. Where they see a decline in earnings, they see that as a target population” (Sahni 2008:[interview]).

In the same interview Sahni asserts that the Naxalite’s capacity lies in the fact that they take up concrete issues:

“They do not approach people in rural or urban areas as Maoists. They approach them as someone assisting them in taking up concerns that are approximate to them,

⁹⁷ Here links to the two surveys conducted by what the South Asian Terrorism Portal terms Maoist movement and the CPI (M-L) People’s War respectively:

<http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/documents/papers/SouthBastar.htm> and <http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/documents/papers/socialcondition.htm>

whether those are student union, labour unions or caste associations. It is a part of their charter. The movement states that those partial struggles are a part of their strategy, but only as long as it takes forward the protracted war. The Naxalites will then assist in organising protests and during such a rally, potential adherents are selected” (Sahni 2008:interview).

Sahni underlines that potential recruits are subsequently approached, but that this takes place on an individual level and not at a group level. It is these individual representatives from the Naxalite movement that furthers the contact and thus prospective constituents are eventually put in touch with Naxalite groups. Sahni (2008:[interview]) argues that this aspect highlights the fact that the movement has long-term goals and that “it is not after a quick-fix”. Revati’s narrative details such a process. She said that after the group of Dalits had joined the Radical Student Union they participated in rallies and campaigns. She claimed to play a prominent role in mobilising women during such a campaign, portraying a leading role. Subsequently she was approached by the Radical Women’s league. The representatives recognised her leadership qualities and requested her to join the movement; “in their opinion I was active and they were asking me to come and work for the people.” She justified this choice through narrating her background, in which she subsequently summarizes the moment she became a ‘full-timer’:

“I had personal problems, economic problems. It was tough for my family to finance my intermediate schooling. I hated my economic situation. I wanted to become a doctor. There were two things that I remember troubled me at the time. The first was that I didn’t want a common life, to marry with a man and settle down. Second, I wanted education in my life. The main problem for Dalit students is that people like me are struggling. The upper castes have social capital, moral support and money. If I dropped out of education my family would have no moral support. My family were bonded labourers. I got some reservations and education. My family lived through me, because they had not opportunity of education. So I joined the organisation. I became a full-timer when I joined the Radical Women’s organisation. Before joining I knew those people. As an organizer of women’s issues in the student union I had met them. Through the women’s movement I was automatically a part of Janashakti” (Revati 2008:[telephone interview]).

Revati said she knew the representatives from the women’s wing of Janashakti because they had worked together during campaigns when she was a student. This gradual familiarity may have played a contributory role in easing the transition into a full-time membership.

5.3.2 1990s

Frame Extension

By using frame extension an already constituent member of a movement seeks to discover something of interest to prospective adherents in their life situation and portray a group's activities as attending to or matching those of the individual. Members joining this way had direct contact with a party representative prior to joining. In contrast to the earlier, people joining in this period did not enter via a front organisation, but became immediate members. Here is an excerpt from Kranti's interview:

“At the initial stages the movement members used to campaign in the villages. They used to come to the villages and they used to interact with the people. At that time there was a party member and she happened to be a lady. I had contact with her and used to discuss with her, in this way I was attracted to the movement. At the time party members used to go to the villages to campaign the party ideas, to campaign against child labour and at that time I was interacting with them. I liked it and I joined”(Kranti 2008:[interview]).

This type of interpersonal frame extension is prevalent in the organizational structure of all Naxalite factions. A member is designed to act as a PR⁹⁸, who enters in contact with poorer sections of society in rural villages. The PR stays for weeks, months or even a year in the village discovering what the everyday struggles and concerns of the villagers are. The PR encourages and assists in rallying protests. After such protests have taken place, potential adherents are approached and encouraged to join in the movement to attain their interests through collective action. This supports Sahni's argument that the Naxalite movement has portrayed a great capacity in addressing local and concrete issues of concern for people they attempt to organize and recruit. On an inter-organisational level a party representative can act as a link between the Naxalite groups and a mass movement, in both urban and rural areas.⁹⁹ The narratives of Nirmala and Kranti illustrate that this type of recruitment can also relate to approximate personal concerns in one's life situation: “I joined

⁹⁸ For an organisational map and position of party representatives in Naxalite movements, please see appendix 3.

⁹⁹ The CPI (ML) People's War documentary and the current political programme of the CPI (ML) claim that Party cells or Local Guerrilla Squads should carry the primary responsibility in connecting people to the organisation and assisting in protests.

because of dowry deaths and child marriages” (Nirmala 2008:[interview]). Kranti emphasised that female party representative spoke about child marriages and child labour. I asked what more the party representative spoke about and Kranti said ‘land’; “their main point and the single motto of the party was that they wanted to become owners of the land” (Kranti 2008:[interview]). However, Nirmala and Kranti underlined the female representative’s role of addressing issues like dowry deaths and forced marriages as more significant than land. A male representative may not have been equally as successful in addressing the same issues and gained young women’s attention. As an extension of Dr. Sahni’s argument that Naxalite groups show great capacity speaking about local concerns and grievances, the same groups strategically use representatives with relevant backgrounds and identities in doing so. In the case of Kranti and Nirmala, they both related to a female representative. This highlights the strategic element of selecting appropriate party representatives for the specific group the Naxalite movement aims to recruit.

Political Opportunity Structure and Repression

In the period these informants joined, the Congress Party had reassumed its position in the Andhra Pradesh government. Towards the end of 1989 Dr. Chenna Reddy and the Congress Party regained power. The first year in power he pursued a threefold liberal policy; he freed Naxalite prisoners who were imprisoned without trial or conviction, he allowed all Naxalite factions to hold public meetings and restrained the police from interfering with legitimate activities pertaining to all movements perceived to be Naxalites (Singh 2006:139). Simultaneously the chief Minister launched a Remote Areas Development Programme (RADP)¹⁰⁰ that sought to make tribals move away from participation in Naxalite groups. The ban on Naxalite groups was lifted and they held mass meetings all over the state. Varavara Rao (2008:[telephone interview]) recalls that during one rally in Warangal up to 14,000 people participated. Nonetheless, violence peaked once again in 1991, as the

government clamped down on Naxalite groups holding people's courts¹⁰¹ and governments. Naxalite movements proved to be a fierce and tough opponent for the Border Security Police employed by the government, and as a consequence it boosted their self-confidence (Singh 2006:141). Kranti referred to the experience of repression by the Border Security Force as another motivation for joining:

“When my brother expired, the police started saying that my family belongs to the party. Several times they attacked our house and they demolished the house, they were tortured, repression was more. The Border Security Force entered in the villages and our clutches. We were unable to stay in the villages. That repression made me join the movement. Several times police attacked our house, demolished and destroyed, that's why I joined the movement. This repression made it easy to join”(Kranti 2008:[interview]).

Snow et al. (1986:478) assert that social movements are vulnerable under certain circumstances. In the early 1990s Naxalite groups in Andhra Pradesh revived their strategies of mass mobilisation when the government ban was lifted. The experiences of Nirmala and Kranti suggest that they placed less emphasis on recruitment via front organisations, but rather on direct recruitment by employing a strategy of frame extension, as contrasted to frame bridging in the early period. This may have been a significant factor for recruiting dedicated individuals during this period.

Women

There was a greater tendency of female recruitment during the 1990s. Kranti related this to the fact that the movement campaigned on discriminatory practices that women faced:

“At that time there were women leaders also, that was the initial stage for women in the movement. During 1991, there was a lot of recruitment of women.....when dowry killings started....dowry deaths....then many women joined the party” (Kranti 2008:interview).

¹⁰⁰ For more details on the content and Action Plan undertaken under the RADP, please read (Reddy 2008:44-47).

¹⁰¹ These are called Jan Andalats and are organized by the village level administration (Sangam). The Sangam functions as the instrument for the Villages Committees in spreading Naxalite ideology, increasing its support base and assisting the armed wing. In some cases the Sangam has challenged or replaced traditional tribal structures of village headmen, priests and village level councils of elected government representatives (gram panchayats) (HRW 2008:19-20).

In an interview with N. Venugopal he narrated an incident that is related to that of Nirmala and Kranti's experiences. The incident not only highlights possible reasons for why women joined, but also how the news of such recruitment was portrayed by the media and received by the public:

“In 1997-1998 there was an encounter and 7 girls were killed; 7 girls in one incident. All of them were below 25 years of age, between 18 and 25. There was a lot of hue and cry at that time and immediately the government ordered an Indian Administrative Service officer to inquire into why people were joining and why women were joining. He wrote a report. In that report he said that most of these women are either married and left their husbands and joined the movement because of domestic violence. That was the first reason. The second one was; girls whose marriage was fixed without their consent and they wanted to escape the marriage, they also joined the movement. And three, widows in rural areas whose life became miserable because of male oppression on them, they wanted to join” (2008:[interview]).¹⁰²

5.3.3 Summary

Members in the early and later decades joined in a period stretching from the end of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1990s. During this whole period high levels of repression were employed and bans on the movement were imposed on several occasions. Nonetheless, this did not deter informants in both groups from joining. As argued in the theory section, frame alignment theory falls short in explaining why individuals choose to join under circumstances of authoritarianism and violence. Noonan argues that cultural norms and identity may have a greater influence on choices for joining a movement. The following section will address factors contributing to the sustenance of membership in CPI (ML) PW and CPI (ML) Janashakti.

5.4 Transition and Frame Sustenance

This section covers the transition into full time members and some of the factors contributing to remaining for some time in the movement. This section also highlights elements that triggered the process of leaving the movement.

5.4.1 1990s

In the 1970s and 1980s contact was established through the organisational linking between a Naxal faction and a front organisation. However to sustain and deepen this linkage, the movement must have been successful in negotiating and sustaining its interpretive frames.

Altering Identities and Creating Awareness

Both the PW and Janashakti seek systemic alteration. An essential objective and feature of such transformation is effecting changes in the way members see their life situation and themselves. This change in individual's self-perception is visible in Rajesh' narrative in which he depicts a process where old derogatory names associated with his Dalit identity were replaced by more positive ones:

“All these opportunities to read and study concepts made me confident. I am a human being, I am no longer a human being of less worth, I am a leader and I have status. These titles were all ordained by the movement and the people; you are a leader, you are a writer, you are an artist, an articulator, and ideologue, a poet. So this poor fellow, this Dalit fellow [pointing to himself], has his negative name replaced, by the positive ones. It made people like me strengthened and capacitated” (2008:[interview]).

Rajesh extends this experience of ‘replacing’ his Dalit name with a ‘status’ as one of awareness about the limits and capacities of his Dalit identity:

“At the time we joined we were not aware of the social background, but more concerned about the economic factors. There was not much caste consciousness. We were very little aware of Ambedkar ideology” (Rajesh 2008:[interview]).

Rajesh says that in the beginning there was little awareness of the social aspect of caste oppression, and discussions were centered on economic discrimination. In frame amplification a social movement aims to tap into and invigorate already existing cultural values, beliefs and narratives that may have been impeded by factors listed in the theory section. In the case of Rajesh the clarification of oppression having a social dimension by virtue of being a Dalit proved important for mobilization into the CPI (ML) Janashakti.

¹⁰² For more information about the function of IAS officers under the ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, please visit: <http://persmin.nic.in/>

Becoming a Full Timer

“Revati: I became a full-timer when I joined the women’s movement, but before that when I was a student they would come to me and they would say I was active and a good leader, to they asked me to come and work for the people.

Maria: who were they?

Revati: The CPI (ML) movement. Before joining the Janashakti, I knew these people in the women’s movement, because I eventually became organiser of women’s issues in the student union” (Revati 2008:[telephone interview B]).

The transition into a full-time member does not necessarily have to be an abrupt and life-changing moment. Revati underlined that: “When I joined the Radical Woman’s Union I was automatically a member of Janashakti, because it was the structure back then.” The transition was seen as a continuation of the student movement activities, though entailing greater responsibilities and sacrifices. Suneel and Rajesh also describe becoming a full-timer as a transitional process, in which they gradually build experience and knowledge about the organisation through participation in campaigns and studying the ideology.

Believing in the ‘Downtrodden’

Frame amplification is contingent on the capacity to tap into existing cultural values, beliefs and narratives. To encourage participation in a front organisation and further the participation in a Naxalite movement, the movement had to be successful in some form of frame amplification to sustain the ultimate goal of frame transformation. The narrative offered by the radical student union was one in which the rhetoric of being ‘downtrodden’ was prominent. Revati reveals that identifying with such a rhetoric was easy: “They spoke about the downtrodden, we were downtrodden too” (2008:[telephone interview B]). In this way the student organisation tapped into an already existing narrative, in which the Dalit student group and Revati identified with. Frame amplification is also contingent on an optimistic belief that collective social action is necessary. All informants in this group participated in campaigns in front organisations and in Naxalite groups. All of them experienced detention in police custody, yet they continued participating in collective action after they were released, except in one case. They portrayed a

strong belief in the necessity of collective action and that it was appropriate for them to stand up and fight oppression. These types of beliefs are characteristic of amplification. This conviction is often linked to a sentiment of moral obligation, which in turn is influenced by cultural norms and values. Obligations are often directed at the group with which the individual identifies. In the initial stages these informants entered via their Dalit student networks. Eventually the sensation of solidarity and obligation was directed at other middle and lower castes and tribals. Rajesh (2008:[telephone interview]) argued that while he was a member the party put heavy emphasis on unity:

“In the beginning when you were a member of the party you considered all people with dignity and rights. There was no difference between people. Their strategy was to unite and uplift the people. The focus was on deprived people. It was a class struggle – to uplift the poor.”

The informants united themselves in a struggle with the leadership, which were higher castes, middle castes, lower castes and tribals. The moral obligation was directed at these groups and ethnicities in the first years as full-time members. Rajesh also offers a possible explanation as to how it was possible for the leadership to create such unity between people:

“Mostly tribals carried the weapons and did the fighting. After the tribals came the Dalit in the movement. Because of this the dynamic of mutual discipline and trust was needed. This helped us unite” (Rajesh 2008: [telephone interview]).

The sharing of a common responsibility and the necessity of being disciplined and trust each other for carrying out that responsibility, necessitated a degree of unity between the different groups.

Songs and Poems

The emphasis that Naxalite movements put on unity between individuals and groups was important for their objective to create a common class identity. Elevating and reinvigorating beliefs of unity must be done through appropriate micromobilization tasks to sustain and reinforce such frames. The most prevalent micromobilization tasks were that of songs. As mentioned earlier this was also one of the elements that attracted Revati to the movement. The songs

contained messages aiming to unify the masses, express discontent and worked as consolation when times were tough. Routledge (1997:2177) notes that culturally there was a dichotomy between the cadres and leaders of the movement. The leadership was predominantly urban, educated and middle-class.¹⁰³ The people they attempted to organise, the cadres, were mainly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This dichotomy is also reflected in Rajesh' interview:

“Most tribals carried the weapons and did the fighting. After tribals came the Dalits. It is the cadres, us, that were forced to work. In the armed squads there were some tribal leaders, because they knew the geography and local areas. But at the political level there were no Dalit and tribal leaders. The higher castes had more education and more knowledge. That is why people listened to them. More knowledge teaches you leadership role”(Rajesh 2008:[telephone interview]).

Routledge (1997:2177) argues that the movement has actively tried to bridge this gap between the urban middle-class culture and rural peasant or tribal culture through songs and poetry. This process was facilitated by thousands of urban middle-class activist joining in the struggle to establish literate bases for people in rural areas. Routledge quotes Banerjee and states that:

“In the folds of the movement, there took place a brief encounter between the two cultures....each became more aware of itself, of its potentialities and limitations in the light of the other. In the poetry that was born on the boundaries of these two cultural worlds, folk art, and urban symbolism enriched each other” (Banerjee 1987, in Routledge 1997:2177).

Poetry, songs and ballads were essential for the spread Naxalite political ideology and propaganda. The effectiveness lay in the movement's capacity to retain the traditional form and tune, but change the contents and lyrics of songs (Routledge 1997:2177). Rajesh (2008:[interview]) said that: “tribals danced and played music, but they changes the content of the songs.” In the previous section Revati also said that she was attracted to the songs and that it was common to sing songs during campaigns in the villages. Routledge

¹⁰³ This was also a common feature of the Maoist movement in Nepal. Jeremy Weinstein (2007:303-4) asserts that a core of highly sophisticated and educated members was critical to the CPN's expansion; “In rural areas, its early campaigns, using political education and indoctrination, expanded the support base of the rebels to include ethnic and caste groups long ignored or exploited by the central government.” Weinstein argue that; “new cadres were carefully selected, screened, and educated in Maoist doctrine before they were given responsibilities in the movement” (Weinstein 2007:304).

(1997:2177) contends that revolutionary poets specifically composed songs that contained typical metaphors and tunes of the particular rural environment: “many of the songs would speak of injustices and acted as an active expression of an active mode of resistance”. The poem below illustrates such expression of injustice:

“I am writing this song from the pain of
Women raped before their men,
From the agony of the people’s heroes
Tied to the trees and shot
For the crime of hunger asking for food,
For the sin of desire to live like human beings.”
[From “A song Honed on Rough Rock” by H.R.K.]
(Banerjee 1987, in Routledge 1997:2178)

This use of songs was an effective act of micromobilization. The adjustment of familiar songs, given a new content facilitated through the literal skills of urban middle-class and higher caste leaders and sympathizers enabled the movement to adopt an appropriate interactive and communicative tool for effect, and thus sustain frame transformation and amplification.

Domain Transformation

Sustenance of frame transformation is also dependent on the transformation of some domain in an individual’s life. The experience of studying Marxist ideology coupled with her selection as a leader, altered Revati’s self-perception as an individual. Revati considered this selection as a choice of the “people”:

“It was the people who gave leadership to me. This way I got respect from the other leaders and the people. When the people chose me as a leader, the party leaders also respected me. Inside the organization we had skills. We worked for the people. We got confidence on life, respect for one’s own life and it gave value to my life. It was a type of theory credit to” (Revati 2008:[telephone interview A]).

Revati realized her worth as an individual and felt empowered. She realized she was equal to all other human beings. She could no longer accept the injustice she was treated with by virtue of being a Dalit. Ironically at the end of her life cycle in the movement, this was the aspect that triggered the process of leaving. Marxism became a step along the path towards an increased self-perception of what it means to be a Dalit, but subsequently she decided that the societal

change she wanted had to be achieved by constitutional means and not through armed struggle.

Appropriate Articulators

Frame extension through interaction with a party representative was important for the women who join the CPI (ML) PW in the 1990s. They both belonged to the category of OBCs. Yet the diffusion of the People's War interpretive frame must have diffused to such a level that they found the campaigning for tribal rights and participation in agricultural projects relevant. The representatives of the Naxalite group addressed concrete issues that were relevant to the women who joined. This was done by a female representative, which shows the strategic element of choosing an appropriate articulator when aiming to mobilize specific groups. An excerpt from Kranti describes this encounter:

“Kranti: After joining I became the member of the woman organization. There is a woman, separate women movement, I joined it. There is a separate party, a women's organization in the party.

Maria: OK. When you joined did you become leader, or did it take some time?

Kranti: Sometimes I worked as a member of a group. My activity made me become a leader. I became a member of the party first, then I became the leader of the women” (Kranti 2008:[interview]).

Transition and Testing Loyalty

Kranti's narrative revealed that even if she was considered an immediate member of the CPI (ML) People's War, she had to portray her loyalty and go through stages of training to become a complete member. None of the informants in the early phase described this type of 'testing':

“First they gave me small weapons like axe. In the initial stages they were testing whether I was going to stay there or not, if I was believable and reliable. They wanted to test me. In the initial stages – in more than six months they agreed whether to believe or not, if she was going to stay. Then eventually they gave me a uniform, we could not wear Saris (2008:[interview]).

This narrative suggests that during this period handling a weapon was seen as a part of becoming a member, and that recruitment into the movement did not necessarily take place via a process of gradual familiarizing with Marxist concepts and learning the foundations of the ideology. Rather, the emphasis was on action: “Sometimes I worked as a group member. My activities made

me become leader. Initiations, observations...then I became leader of the party, the women's leader" (Kranti 2008:[interview]). The participation in concrete activities and campaigning on issues the women felt relevant to their life situation and self-perception as females, may have led to a sensation of empowerment, which in turn influenced the decision to remain in the movement:

“Maria: As a member of the woman organization what did you have to do?

Kranti: At that time there were liquor station campaigns, anti-liquor campaigns and at the same time several marriages - one man used to marry several women. Against that I called and convinced everyone. I tried to aware the woman through the party administration" (2008:[interview]).

However the identification and invigoration of an interpretive frame must always be complemented by micromobilization tasks. The women both mentioned they married inside the movement. In Kranti's narrative this marriage confirmed the absence of caste discrimination in the sense that it was an inter-caste marriage:

“There was no humiliation in the movement. We were free inside the party. I got married in the movement. It was an ideal marriage. It was an inter-caste marriage. I met him in the party. We decided to live together and under the guidance of the party we married. We don't have any children" (Kranti 2008:[interview]).

Bela Bhatia's (1998) work in Bihar sheds light on the practise of inter-caste marriages in the Naxalite movement. Bhatia describes the prevalence of 'ideal marriage', similar to Kranti's description in the above excerpt. However, in Bihar this practice was contrasted to the social context, where inter-caste marriages were a taboo. Revati, who joined in the 1980s and came from a Dalit background made no mention of such a context, but stated in general terms, that: "the Naxalites gave opportunities for women".

5.5 Framing of Leaving

5.5.1 End of the 1980s and 1990s

The success or failure of any frame alignment process is contingent on the utilization of suitable micromobilization actions. This section will depict the complexities around these processes and in what way they influenced informants' processes of leaving.

Repression

For Suneel (2008:interview) his experience in prison contributed to the decision to leave. After he came out he claimed 'ill health' and decided to leave. Suneel left the CPI (ML) People's War at the end of the 1980s and this was the period in which the TDP and N.T. Rama Rao was in power. From 1985 and onwards Andhra Pradesh experienced an exceptionally high level of repression. Yet, the other informants remained in the movement. They had experienced arrests during their membership but had been released. These interviewees remained in the CPI (ML) Janashakti until 1998. In contrast to Suneel, they attributed the process of leaving to disillusionment with ideology. Unlike People's War, Janashakti experienced several splits from 1996 onwards, which weakened the party considerably (SATP 2008). Rajesh narrated that in the mid 1990s Janashakti experienced several internal debates and discussions regarding caste and gender issues:

"There were some atrocities and massacres, like the Chunduru¹⁰⁴ massacre, that was big outside the party. The left parties were not able to understand the issue at that time because of many limitations. These caste and gender issues, and this authority leadership and the cadre responsibilities; all of these things just emerged and shocked our party within a short span, in 3-4 years" (Rajesh, 2008: [interview])

This excerpt also reflects questions about leadership and cadre responsibilities and divisions. Revati claims that the repression that was unleashed in the 1990s reinforced the caste differences in the movement, and ultimately what it meant to her as a woman and a Dalit:

"When repression came it had major impact on women. Upper caste women never entered the stage of armed cadres. Only Dalit and Tribal women did. They were the victims. There was no anger from upper caste women against landlords. Only from Dalit and tribal women" (Revati 2008:[telephone interview A]).

Rajesh formulated the caste difference in terms of security:

"You have two cadres, one Dalit and one upper middle caste. The upper middle caste is always secure. He is in mainstream society. He will be secure and protected by family and friends. This is a psychological aspect. Secondly, it is financial in the sense that family and friends will provide for them. For a Dalit it is difficult to find people that will care for him" (Rajesh 2008: [telephone interview]).

¹⁰⁴ Chunduru is in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

Revati describes the caste differences in terms of roles in the movement, as well as an issue of vulnerability:

“The higher castes were never activists like us. I know the subjects and situation of the people. Upper castes do not participate and show themselves openly. They are superficial, their position is fake. Activists need protection. There was no protection for us. My family was not rich. They were available and they could not give me protection. For protection I need rich relatives. Dalits are not rich. They can not give me shelter. This is caste discrimination. Dalit activist are more vulnerable” (Revati 2008:[telephone interview B]).

The ideology proclaimed equality between castes and all kinds of people, as the informants had initially experienced. Naxalite movements state that the masses should lead the revolution, but a common feature of Naxalite movements in India, as well as in Nepal is that the political part of the movements is led by Brahmin elite. However, as repression increased the caste cleavages and the power of social and economic capital became visible. The interpretive frame and internal micromobilization tasks fell short of reversing such disillusionment. Human Rights Watch (2007:article 2, ii.) claims that since the implementation of ‘Draconian laws’ from 1980s and onwards to fight Naxalism, Dalits have been particularly vulnerable as targets for the security forces. The report also states that:

“Though upper-caste community members have also been picked up by the police in this manner, they are unusually not subject to such harsh treatment as a result of pressure from influential people belonging to their caste” (HRW 2007:article 2).

This experience triggered, according to Rajesh, a process of internal questioning and debates inside the CPI (ML) Janashakti. Successful frame transformation is dependent on an individuals’ adoption of a master frame, in which all events and issues are clarified and understood in relation to a global interpretive frame. Any frame must continuously be sustained through interactive and communicative processes. There must also be a degree of resonance between the frame and the individual’s life situation. One factor accounting for frame resonance is *credibility*. Through the narratives above, the hierarchical and internal organizational discrimination of lower castes, which was exacerbated by repression, describes a type of credibility that accounts for

contradictions between a movements' frame and its micromobilization tasks. Credibility also relates to a fit between the frame and events at large. Revati mentioned the massacres on Dalits happening outside the movement, "before the eyes of everyone" as one event that made her question the relevance of class theory. The massacre in Chunduru was emphasized as an important event:

"In the 1980s and 1990s there were many massacres on Dalits. In Chunduru Dalits were killed by the Brahmins. This happened before the eyes of everyone. Then we realized it was a basic problem. After this we started reading Ambedkar, Dalit history and about Brahmin oppression. We started questioning the upper caste leadership" (Revati 2008:[telephone interview B])

The Chunduru incident in 1991 was according to Kancha Ilaiah (2004:237-250) a continuation and reinforcement for the Dalit struggle that emerged after the Karamchedu¹⁰⁵ massacre in 1985 in Andhra Pradesh¹⁰⁶. Chunduru triggered a discourse in which caste and class was discussed as dualities and not as a one-dimensional issue subsumed under class. However this discourse took the shape of an internal categorical explanation on the part of the leadership who treated the caste issue as subsumed under 'class struggle'. Revati said that she had heard the argument before, and that it was useful. Despite the leadership's concern about the caste issue in terms of massacres and discrimination; "They said that when the class problem is solved, then the caste problem will automatically change" (Revati 2008:[telephone interview B]). Through the occurrence of these events Revati's once felt solidarity will all types of individuals regressed, and a redirection of a sensation of moral obligation took place, in which Dalits only took centre stage.

Conflicting Values

For Rajesh the process of questioning was not triggered only by external events or an imbalanced internal structure, for him it was also about the values the Naxalite doctrine proffered:

¹⁰⁵ Karamchedu is in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

¹⁰⁶ For more information on the Karamchedu and Chunduru incidents, please read; Ilaiah, K. (1995:237-250).

“When I was in the party, the simplicity was there. This was one of the cultures promoted by the Communist party. Simplicity; that meant wearing slippers and very simple shirts. Actually, the reality was, the people from Dalit community were already simple, so there was no need to teach them about simplicity. And also they can not force them for this simplicity. Because the so called simplicity is the problem for Dalits, that is an issue for us. Those kinds of cultural values need to be changed. If you see it from the Dalit perspective; the western European class style Communist perspective sees that it as simplicity, that we led simple lives. But that is suppression for me, because my desire is to wear good clothes and good shoes, have good life, good food. Because I need it and because I have never enjoyed it. Because the people who came from dominant castes and upper classed, who enjoyed a car, who enjoyed a house.....they are wearing simple shirts and they are wearing slippers. That is fine. But I think these kinds of differences needs to be interpreted. And they need to be made understood for each and everybody. What is simplicity? Why it is simplicity? What is simplicity for Dalits and what is simplicity for upper caste non-Dalits? So if you ask some Dalit to wear cheaper clothes and cheap slippers, and eat three rupees rice, and if you say that it is a value of simplicity, then it's very difficult for Dalits to digest it” (Rajesh 2008:[interview]).

This also reflects that when he joined and while he was a member he had certain expectations that his life would improve. The Naxalite frame promulgated equality and betterment for the poor. However, there was a paradox in preaching simplicity and equality for everyone, when this meant leading a life in simple living conditions. This provoked a sensation of contradiction, especially for those that wanted ‘betterment’. Rajesh claimed it was easier for upper castes to give up what they had once owned and had the possibility to return to, than for Dalits who had never experienced any form of security or richness. This initiated a protest in which the lower caste segment of the Janashakti challenged their leadership:

“Maria: Why did you decide to leave?

Rajesh: We wanted our leadership....we didn't want to continue as cadres...There was a conflict between Dalits and non-Dalits” (2008:[interview]).

There was a weakness in the capacity to extend, but also clarify and sustain the priority of caste issues. This led to internal conflicts on what class struggle really is. For the leadership it was to unite all poorer sections of society independent of caste, creed or ethnicity. For Revati for example, there was a problem with the narrow outlook of the class ideology; “Downtrodden people are also low class, but they are also low caste.” In the first years as full-time members values of solidarity and unity was predominant. Frame transformation

in a movement that seeks systemic alteration attempts to sustain its frame through other complimentary frame alignment processes. Whether the weakening or regression of a global interpretive frame contributed to lack of success in values amplification or vice versa was hard to derive from informants' narratives. However, it was clear that a change on several levels occurred and one of these changes that was that the value of simplicity, which was embedded on the Marxist doctrine of class unity, was not longer attractive for Rajesh. An acceptance of this doctrine meant an acceptance of no change in his life situation.

Marxism as a step towards Ambedkarism

However the familiarity of Marxism and the altering of their self-perception proved an important step away from Naxalism and towards Ambedkarism. B.S. Ambedkar's ideology had elements of Marxism, but was Dalit oriented and proffered a constitutional solution to fight caste oppression. It was particularly the feeling of personal empowerment and changing their self-perception of being worth less due to their Dalit identity. Janashakti was successful in providing the informants with an injustice frame, in which blame was externalized and the movement assisted in fighting this external enemy; the government, landlords and imperialist forces. The movement's objective was to alter the situation for the poorer sections of society, consisting of Dalits and tribal groups. This entails transformation in some domain in life. In the case of informants in this group Janashakti was successful in altering social relationships between people in the first years of membership. As repression increased the movement failed to maintain and promote equality and non-discriminatory treatment inside the movement. Revati also felt that the social status she gained inside the movement, did not transfer to the world outside, which was reflected in her narrative of visiting her village during her time in Janashakti:

“Around my village the upper caste people knew I was a Dalit. Upper caste people were not giving me water in their glasses. Inside the movement there was not untouchability, but when I went to my village the untouchability was still there” (Revati 2008[telephone interview B]).

In relation to the domain of self-perception the movement was successful and this is reflected in the narrative on the impact the movement had in altering the way in which the informants viewed themselves:

“Maria: What has the movement meant to you, personally?

Rajesh: It has given me so much. It has given me leadership qualities, discipline, certain good values, like no corruption, but most importantly it has given me confidence, and over-confidence that I can achieve anything. This I am also teaching my children. I feel sad talking about the weaknesses and limits of the movement. We worked with grassroots people. We had collective collaboration and sharing. In villages, people begged us to stay and be with them and help them. This opportunity I will never get back” (2008:[telephone interview]).

Revati adds that; “I gained new knowledge. Because of the experience in the movement I got self-worth, courage and discipline” (2008:[telephone interview B])

When Rajesh left the CPI (ML) Janashakti he said he and other Dalits who left simultaneously, formed new group. This outbreak came after a period of internal debates on whether seeking leadership was a result of a revolutionary desire or democratic desire:

“When the questions came, there was an interesting debate, whether this was a democratic aspiration or a revolutionary desire. So we agreed it was a democratic desire. So there was a vertical split. Most of the armed squads happened to be Dalits, so the majority was on one side and the mainstream people were on the other side. We formed a group, a separate party. We started working our own ideology, Ambedkarism plus Marxism, caste and class theory, focusing on identity and analysis. Even then there were a lot of questions, on how it was possible to mix the ideologies....by that time I came out” (Rajesh 2008:[interview]).”

The group that was formed was the Communist Party of the United States of India (CPUSI). In 1997 there was a split in the Janashakti and the outbreak group aimed to focus more on caste issues (Massline.info 2005). An article published in *The Hindu* (Reporter 2005) claims that the CPUSI is a sub-group under the CPI (ML) Janashakti Veerana faction. Rajesh (2008:[interview]) said that by the time this group was formed he left.

Failure of Frame Amplification

In frame amplification the sensation of the moral obligation of “doing the right thing” is often directed towards groups with which the individual identifies.

The initial phase of membership was often marked by a sensation of a moral obligation towards all 'downtrodden' class and poor tribals. The informants also had a strong belief in the necessity and propriety of standing up. They believed there was no other alternative but to engage in radical collective action in a Naxalite group. An individual's belief moral obligation is influenced by cultural norms and values that vary across time and space. This sensation of obligation is frequently directed towards the group or groups with which the individual identifies. Over time the sensation of the informants' moral obligation was re-directed towards their affinity with Dalit identity, as thus felt an obligation to engage in collective action on behalf of Dalit society. This aspect relates to the issue of centrality and the distance between what the party says and what it does. The ideological programme states that the people should lead the revolution, but a common feature of the Naxalite movement in India, was well as in Nepal, is that leadership positions are occupied by a Brahmin elite. Dalits who questioned this inequality within the movement were drawn to Ambedkarism and identified with the Dalit struggle. Ironically, what triggered their questioning was the categorical answer from the CPI (ML) Janashakti leadership that caste would be subsumed under class struggle, and when the latter gained, the caste problem would be dissolved automatically. This pointed to their failure in adequately sustaining and negotiating the significance of caste in the interpretive frame of the party. Revati highlighted the importance of a Dalit massacre that took place in Chunduru in 1991. The failure to include and mould the experience of such an event in the interpretive frame of the movement, proved to be a weakness of the leadership, which contributed to the informants leaving the movement.

Failure of Frame Transformation

Transformation of a global interpretive frame is contingent on the adoption of an injustice frame and whether blame is internalized or externalized. In this group blame was externalized and informants did believe governments and higher castes were to blame, which fit well with the master frame of the Naxalite movement. Frame transformation can be both domain-specific and

global in nature. In domain-specific transformation changes in how a domain of life is viewed is altered. Three domains will be relevant here, social relationships, social status and self-perception. Social relationships were altered in the movement to some degree, as all types of people initially interacted independent of their caste or ethnicity. Yet, there was a lack of changes in society outside the movement, coupled with a hierarchical internal structure that hampered the complete change social relationships within the movement. In terms of status, membership in the movement and the empowerment attained through studying concepts and participating in activities did alter the members' subjective perception of status. They initially felt proud to be a revolutionary and sensed a great deal of human dignity and equality to all other people through their experience in the movement. This altered altogether their self-perception. The CPI (ML) Janashakti was successful in altering the self-perception of Revati and Rajesh. They felt empowered and encouraged to stand up for their rights. For a movement that seeks change in the status of a group of people in society, it must be successful in changing the way individuals see themselves. The movement was successful in attaining this. However, the movement was not able to sustain and eliminate ambiguity between the domains in life to complete an alteration of the global interpretive frame. The experience of Marxism had instead been an important process of self-realization and a step along the path towards adopting an Ambedkarist master frame. This master frame has many Marxist elements and is in this sense related to Marxism. However, the prognostics and motivational framings differ from that of the Marxist- Leninist- Maoist master frame, that it does not propagate armed struggle and revolution as the ameliorative strategies for change for Dalits.

5.5.2 Current Decade

In contrast to the previous group's disillusionment with Marxist ideology, coupled with unsuccessful micromobilization actions, informants in this period left as a part of the rehabilitation and surrender strategies of the government of Andhra Pradesh. They did not want to leave, they claimed, but were forced to

do so by the government. However, they both mentioned that health was a contributory factor for leaving. “Because of ill health I came out”. Nonetheless this story was coupled with the experience of repression and threats being posed to their lives and their families’ lives:

“Nirmala: They captured my family and they killed my husband. They told that they would kill me and my family if I didn’t leave. I was promised 20 lakh from the government. But I don’t have any money. Inside the movement I had a life. This is not a life” (2008:[interview]).

Coming out of the movement was in some way a process of pressure and coercion. However, the fact that their health was deteriorating did facilitate in coming out of the movement. The narratives of ‘ill health’ have been a common factor that had been mentioned when articles have been published:

“Maria: Why did you decide to leave?

Kranti: At that time I was arrested. The government told me if you don’t surrender, we will kill your husband and your family. The government used force, because they wanted me to come out from the movement. Due to ill health I surrendered.

Maria: How did this happen?

Kranti: During the 2005 I was arrested by the police. At that time I was a member. I fled at the same time I was arrested. Government warned me to disown the party and to come out from the party. Due to ill health I came out.

Maria: What happened to your husband, did they take him?

Kranti: The police wanted to kill him in encounter him that is why they told me to surrender to the police. Police captured our family, and said to me; you better surrender yourself otherwise we will kill you” (2008:[interview]).

I still want to be a Naxalite

For informants in this period they seemed to have attained a global interpretive frame in which they still relate their current experience to outside the movement. The following is a narrative the depicts contrasts in the world inside the movement, with their world outside the movement:

“Kranti: There is no Humiliation in the party. We are free in the party. In so-called democratic country, we don’t have any democratic rights. When we were in the party we had each and every right. We enjoyed the rights. We were free. I am not happy here. In the society, there are so many regularities. I really miss the party. It was only due to ill health we came out from the party. I am regretting” (2008:[interview]).

The reasons for citing ill health as a factor determining the decision to leave may be many. To cite ill health may be more neutral than stating other reasons

or none. In the media ill health and disillusionment with ideology were reasons newspapers listed.¹⁰⁷ However, the informants I spoke to only mentioned ill health, and coercions and threats by the government as reasons. Whether this should be interpreted as a desire to speak negatively about the government, and/or the fact that they feared retribution by the CPI (ML) PW group I do not know. I argue that because the women so clearly stated the sensation of being unfree in society at large, they did actually regret not being part of the movement anymore: “If it wasn’t for my bad health I would join again. I was free in the movement. Here I have no life” (Nirmala 2008:[interview]).

In this group frame transformation has been successful in the sense that the informants believe that armed struggle, Maoist ideology and Naxalism is the only solution to attain a true people’s democracy:

“I think everybody should become the Maoist. Even though I am in democratic politics, I think there is no democracy here. Democratically we are not ruling this country. Only armed struggle is the viable solution, the feasible solution, the possible solution to restore real democracy. Those who are having money...government asked you people come in and join in the democratic...you people better to come to join the democratic politics. We decided to join in the democratic politics but we have already entered in the democratic politics. We don’t think so there is a democracy for this democratic...There are a lot of inequalities, there are a lot of corruptions, there is lot of manipulation, and there is lot of caste problems in this country. That’s why what we feel holding Maoist movement we will solve the problem. I don’t think in this country there is a democratic” (Kranti 2008)

The Loss of a Network

Being forced to leave a movement may be similar to the loss of a family. Contrary to for example Rajesh and Revati in the 1990s, Kranti or Nirmala made no mention of other people leaving at the same time. Given that networks often function as catalysts for joining and leaving, the process of leaving must have been experienced a loss of their networks.

¹⁰⁷ Journalist (2001), ‘Congress Congress ‘Naxalism in Anantapur dist may wane’, The Times of India, link: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/934853641.cms>
Correspondent (2005), ‘Top Maoist Naxalite leader Dasari Alivelu surrenders’, Wordpress, link: <http://naxalwatch.wordpress.com/2005/08/12/top-maoist-naxalite-leader-dasari-alivelu-surrenders/>
Reporter (2007), ‘Naxals Surrender’, The Hindu, link: <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2007010704380300.htm&date=2007/01/07/&prd=th&>

5.5.3 *Summary*

An interesting aspect when examining the various narratives of leaving is how reasons have changed over time. People leaving in the earlier phase described a process of debates and discussions taking place prior to leaving the movement. They portrayed their decision to leave as one they made, rooted in the disillusionment with Marxist ideology. This disillusionment entailed a lack of accommodation of identity and adequate explanations of events in society at large in which informants related to by virtue of being Dalits. Although gender is not the major focus of this research it is worth noting that the narratives of Revati in the early phase, and that of Nirmala and Kranti in the later phase differ. Whereas Revati's experience is not only colored by her identity as a Dalit, it is also influenced by her identity as a woman. Her narrative relates to the common critique of leftist movements in India. Illina Sen (1990:321) contends that Communist movements in India have brought many women into mass fronts, but has deliberately neglected "the analysis of patriarchal dominance". Women's issues like dowry and forced marriages have been taken up, but only to be subsumed under the issue of 'class struggle' and not letting women assume leading roles in organizations. On the contrary, Nirmala and Kranti's narratives reflect a sensation of being 'unfree' in society by virtue of their own identities as women and OBCs. Both women married in the movement. Kranti used this experience to narrate an absence of internal discrimination. Both women had leading roles, yet were confined to the 'female' wing. This did not seem to matter for them. Whereas for Revati, this separation illustrated the 'double' discrimination Dalit women experienced inside the movement. What these findings suggest is that there may have been a change over time. There may also have been an absence of events that made Nirmala and Kranti question the internal structure. For Revati the familiarization with Marxist ideology had altered her self-perception and empowered her. This may have led to a realization of this 'double discrimination' in the movement, in not being able to assume the role of leader

of the larger Janashakti party. The way in which Nirmala and Kranti was recruited suggested that there was less emphasis on ideology and more on actions, which may have contributed to a lesser degree of consciousness of the significance of remaining in a separate women's party. At the time Revati left, several Dalits left the movement; this also suggests that networks may have played a more prominent role in Revati's case. Networks determine internal relations. Nirmala and Kranti were members in a period when women were recruited in significant numbers, this leading to the establishment of an internal identity as women in the movement. Both these women were practically forced to leave, and that may also have contributed to a certain glorification of their life experience inside the movement.

The manner in which leftist movements have taken up issues relating to women, but failed to include them in leadership roles, is similar to the manner in which tribal issues have been taken up. Routledge (Routledge 1997:2179) argues that the aim was to give tribals a political identity, but not to encourage them to pursue protests based on their ethnic identity, as this was thought to be subsumed under a class consciousness.

5.6 Framing of Staying Out

5.6.1 Current Decade

The narratives of informants in this group draw their experiences from Chhattisgarh. Their stories describe a different situation and stage in the ongoing revolutionary protracted war, which is contrasted to the prior narratives that explain how and why informants joined a Naxalite group in Andhra Pradesh. The narratives of these Koya and Gotti Koya tribal groups illustrate that the CPI (M) still practice a strategy of frame extension. However, the experiences also demonstrate that the manner in which frame extension is carried out and the informants' interpretations of associations and implications of engaging in collective action in a Naxalite group have changed. This change can be ascribed to a shift in the political opportunity structure; increased repression of government forces, the emergence of the Salwa Judum vigilante

group and finally the shift away from activist rebellion towards more opportunistic behaviour on part of the CPI (ML).

Frame Extension

All interviewees had experienced visits from party representatives in their villages. Their experiences dates back many years and depicts a relationship of co-existence. In spite of this co-existence, these informants had not joined the Maoist movement. The majority mentioned that meetings were held by the Maoists and that they often times participated:

“Maria: When was the first time you heard about Maoists?

Male A: They have been there for the last 27 years Maoists.

Maria: And how did you hear about them the first time?

Male A: 27 years back, I was a small boy. See, initially they used to say that, this forest is our, this land is ours we will protect to our interest that’s what they used to say.

Maria: How often did they visit?

Male A: They used to come once a month.

Maria: What did they say and what did they do when they came?

Male A: They used to have a meeting to say that everything is ours and then they used to go away. They never used to beat anyone or do anything.

Maria: And what did you tell them?

Male A: We used to say, yes, yes, yes, nothing more than that. We knew that, if we did anything wrong or anything against them, they would beat us up. So, we used to say yes for whatever they used to say and then they used go away again. See, Maoists have come and gone. Many villagers just used to listen to them. But we had our own way of normal life. The presence of Maoists did not disturb our lives” (2008:[interview]).

Another informant said that the Maoists would inquire about their ‘well-being’. The villagers would give them food and ultimately the Maoists would leave:

“Female B: We did not have any problems with Maoists. They used to come once in a while, asked for some food or grains. We used to collect and give it to them, they used to go away.

Maria: Did you sometimes deny them food if you didn’t have any?

Female B: No, we gave them food. They used to come once in a while and inquire about our well being in the village and used to go away, that’s all. We did not have any problems with the Maoists” (2008:[interview]).

The Change

The informants narrated a significant change in their relationship to Maoists after the emergence of the Salwa Judum in 2005. The following citations illustrate this:

“Female D: Before the Salwa Judum we never had any problems. Nobody had problems with the Maoists. Before, nobody was between the Maoists. Now, there is Salwa Judum” (2008:[interview]).

“Male A: Only when Salwa Judum came into existence, then life got affected.

Maria: And could you say a bit more about how your life was affected?

Male A: Salwa Judum started to come into the villages, started beating people and setting fire to our houses” (2008:[interview]).

The above excerpts also illustrate a violent encounter in which informants were often times beaten by Salwa Judum. Furthermore, the informants described their first encounter with Salwa Judum as one in which their homes were set on fire. The following excerpt depicts such a meeting:

“Male G: When the Salwa Judum came first time into our village, they set fire to the village. So when the Salwa Judum came the rest of the families ran away into the forest and they are living in the forest, where as this six families are here.

Male G: The Salwa Judum people, when they use to come to the village they use to take away the chicken, goats and cattle. They came to the village and took the entire village to the camp” (2008:[interview]).

This encounter did not only entail a presence of Salwa Judum. Many times the police was mentioned in the same regard. I asked the informants if they perceived Salwa Judum and the police to be different, the following response is one that was reflected in the majority of the interviews:

“Maria: Do you think that there is a difference between Salwa Judum and the police?

Female B: They are all together.

Male Speaker: If there is, Salwa Judum doesn’t have uniform.

Maria: Okay. So, police always have uniform?

Female B: Yes, but not always. They behave the same” (2008:[interview]).

Considering the violent behaviour of the Salwa Judum, and how they were associated with the presence of police forces, interviewees had developed a negative image if the actors intending to recruit them into their own network and away from Maoists. However, one narrative also highlighted the difference between what type of police forces engaged in violence with Salwa Judum:

“Male A: Those who did not know us, those were the people who had beaten the villagers. Even local police never beat us because they knew us. It's only the police and Salwa Judum people who did not know us. They were those who ill-treated the people of X” (A 2008:[interview]).

This excerpt highlights the fragmentary experience of the encounter with the state. The local police officers had an established relationship with the tribal

villagers, and they never experienced ill-treatment. However, the police who did not know them were officers of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), administered under the central government administration. The informants were asked if they thought the government would be able to solve the conflict, the response was: “I don’t have confidence in the government” (A 2008:Interview). The negative association of Salwa Judum with major police forces may have been significant in shaping the lack of faith in government.

Why Have You Not Joined?

When asked the question of why informants did not join, the responses pended between the abruption of a normal life style and the fear of threat. The first citation illustrates that the informant had reflected upon what becoming a member of the movement meant, and that this meant not being able to lead a family life and cultivate her land:

“Maria: Why haven't they joined the Maoists?

Female D: See, if I join Maoists who will take care of my children. Who will cultivate our lands? Our children are young, and because of our lands we are not able to join the Maoists. Who will take care of our children? Maoist are on the constant move, so you can't have a gun in your hand and two children” (2008:[interview]).

Another excerpt reflects a different assessment of consequences in joining:

“Male A: See people without thinking that what would be the consequences, they went and joined the Salwa Judum and now their condition is miserable.

Maria: Why is it miserable?

Male A: Because there is threat to their life, there is a great threat to their life from the Maoist now” (2008:[interview]).

This portrays a perception of threat, and that by joining this threat to your life increases. Even though repression was high in the two previous decades, in particularly in the 1990s, none of those informants mentioned the same evaluation of threat. The following excerpt was told by one informant and echoes an awareness of revenge or anger being a motivation for joining:

“Male E: When the Salwa Judum started a fellow joined Salwa Judum. Around 20-year-old boy stole a chicken of one of the villagers and sold it in the chicken market. So that owner of the chicken abused him and slapped him – he slapped this young boy of 20 years. So that fellow went and joined Salwa Judum” (2008:[interview]).

What is the alternative?

Informants would narrate their encounters with Salwa Judum as one in which they were asked to leave their villages and come live in camps. This was often equated with ‘joining the Salwa Judum’:

“**Male F:** If I join Salwa Judum, Maoist will kill us. If I don’t join Salwa Judum and stay in the village Salwa Judum people will come and beat us. So that’s why we have come here” (2008:[interview]).

This narrative also depicts a situation of polarization in which refraining from joining both has become impossible to the fierce competition of people’s support which manifests itself in violent acts of beating and setting fire to villages. This is what influenced their decision to leave and seek refuge in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh.

5.6.1 Summary

Routledge (1997:2179) found in his research from the 1980s and 1990s, that mobilization of tribals and the objective of tribal resistance was subsumed under the Naxalite focus on agrarian class politics. Wages and land occupation were principle issues in mobilization and taking up these struggles was a means for building mass support. The intention was to raise awareness of class struggle and give tribals a political, rather than an ethnic identity against what the Naxalite movement viewed as its opponent, the capitalist Indian state. Informants in this group may simply have found the Naxalite ideology unattractive. However, it is more likely that the shift in the political environment had made it more difficult for the movement to mobilize in the same way they did two decades ago. The tribal groups had experienced visits from Maoists and co-existed with them for several years, without becoming members in a group. In the early and later phases there was more room for familiarizing with the movement, as people joined via front organisations. Because of the escalation of the protracted revolutionary warfare into low intensity conflict, particularly after Salwa Judum was formed; it also lends less space for the Naxalite movement to employ frame alignment strategies similar to those in the earlier phases and engage in mass mobilisation. In an environment of increased repression and radicalization, moderates tend to move away from the movement and radicals take centre stage. This may render

internal discipline more important, which again redefines what it means to be a member of a Naxalite movement. For the informants coming from Chhattisgarh this meant becoming a target for a vigilante group and government police forces, with the risk of losing their lives.

5.7 Frame Resonance

Success or failure of framing processes is contingent on the degree of resonance between an individual's life situation and experience of potential constituents with the content and substance of social movements' proffered frames. Variation in degree of frame resonance is dependent on two factors; credibility and relative salience.

Informants who joined in the 1970s and 1980s, and remained members until the end of the 1990s, experienced a higher degree of credibility in their early life cycle in the movement. The proffered frame of unity among all lower classes in society, and the manner in which the movement attempted to achieve this came across as coherent for the informants. However, over time this frame consistency weakened. This was due to increased repression, which exacerbated tensions among various caste groups in society. Secondly, it was the inadequacy of negotiating and adapting its interpretive frame to offer an appropriate prognostic and motivational framing for the informants in the end. Whereas the movement stated that 'class struggle' and guerrilla warfare was the solution and ameliorative collective action for solving the caste question, the informants disagreed. The continued occurrence of Dalits massacres, like for example the Chunduru incident, did not fit with what the frame proffered and the world at large. This led the informant to discredit what the leadership articulated. As a consequence one informant left the Janashakti and formed a sub-faction, the CPUSI, which focused on caste issues.

In terms of relative salience all of the informants that had joined a Naxalite group, experienced a great degree of experiential commensurability in the first years of membership. For the informants who joined as students, the Marxist-

Leninist-Maoist frame was molded to fit their life situation as students. The frame did also appeal to their backgrounds and identities as Dalits. In particular the narrative of being 'downtrodden' was appealing, making the frame culturally resonant. The concepts of equality, human value, dignity and discipline in Naxalite ideology were perceived as relevant to their lives. The irony is that in the encounter with Naxalite ideology and other members of the movement an altering of their-self perception as Dalits took place. Through their experience in the movement, they gradually saw themselves as human being with equal value to others despite being Dalits. The solidarity they felt was directed at the other caste groups and tribals the Naxalite group mobilized. As Della Porta and Diani assert, identity is dynamic and is shaped in interaction with other actors. With external factors such as repression the interpretation of such interaction changed, and ultimately led to a process in which several of their identities became conflicting. Were they poor, were they low class, were they poor, low class and of a certain gender, and what did this mean to them, were reoccurring questions. The end result was their Dalit identity reassumed centre stage in the interaction with other members over time. Their feeling of belonging was now focused on the Dalit community, and not the collectivity of 'lower classes'.

In relation to the females who joined in the 1990s, the CPI (ML) People's War was able to diffuse its interpretive frame via Party Representative and provoke a great degree of credibility by addressing concrete issues that were relevant for the women at that time, like dowry deaths and forced marriages. Despite having left the movement, the People's War had been successful in transforming their domain-specific and global interpretive frames. The world they lived in now as ex-members were seen as a contrast to the world inside the movement. They showed no ambiguity in stating that inside the movement they were free and that Naxalism and armed struggle were necessities for creating a truly democratic India.

5.8 Competing Frames

Tarrow argues that social movements compete with other actors for cultural supremacy. Bela Bhatia (1998) concluded from her research in Bihar that people's choices for joining was often between one Naxalite faction or another, and not one of upper castes or classes. This is also the case for informants in Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Furthermore, informants also face actions that state governments employ in an attempt to move them away from supporting Naxalite groups. However, this competition from the state government in Andhra Pradesh has taken the form of populist political acts guided by local and historical tradition of caste accommodation and a perception of an extensive threat, as depicted in the background chapter. This has rendered a pattern of fluctuating repression.

5.8.1 Cultural Resonance and Mobilization Response

Bans on Naxalite groups in Andhra Pradesh have been re-imposed and lifted numerous times in the last three decades, yet the movement has been able to mobilize thousands of people in protests and recruited equally as many members. The Naxalite groups have been able to adapt their collective action frames to the dynamic, cultural and social surroundings in which they have operated, which Noonan (1995:86) contends is crucial for mobilization. In the video 'Blazing Trail' the CPI (ML) People's War (PW 2007) emphasises the importance of introspection and learning from previous mistakes. The capacity to accommodate internal debates and respond to cadres' question was in the movie promoted as a positive feature of the movement. The experience of such debates was reflected in the narratives of Rajesh and Revati as well. The movement was able to adapt to the changing cultural environment and adjust its collective interpretive frame to that of the people. However, a change in the capacity to reach the goal of adjustment over time has taken place. Informants in the latter group did not experience that movement mobilizers offered an interpretive frame attractive enough to join. The narratives of Kranti and Nirmala contrasted the ones in the earlier period because their experiences of joining suggested that there was more emphasis on action, then on learning ideology. The movement has attained opportunistic features in the later years.

One informant ascribed this shift to changes in the political opportunity structure:

“Because of the situation they are forced to stick to certain aspects only. Now the enemy is very powerful. It is killing. To conduct plenary meeting now is difficult. Issues of caste for example must also be discussed at higher levels. It is a practical limitation of the party and not an ideological one”(Rajesh 2008:[interview]).

As repression has fluctuated and increased at times the capacity to dedicate more time to accommodate and promote internal debates as a positive feature has decreased. Simultaneously, the CPI (ML) PW and the CPI (ML) Janashakti increased their emphasis on guerrilla warfare in the late 1990s and early 2000, which may have skewed the internal focus away from ideological debates towards the focus on internal discipline and coercive internal structuring to control its cadres. Furthermore, the merger between the CPI (ML) and MCC into CPI (M) marked an even more emphasis on guerrilla warfare with the objective of solidifying the goals ‘liberated zones’. The Expert Group (2008) argues that the merger into CPI (M) was instantly perceived as a great threat.

5.9 Summary

In 1969 the Research and policy Division, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, published a report on the ‘Causes and Nature of Agrarian Unrest’. According to K.S. Subramanian (2007:133) this report recognises the agrarian background of the Naxalite movement. The Report warned that the ‘green revolution’ could turn into a ‘red revolution’ if adequate agrarian reforms, the Naxalbari movement demanded, were not undertaken. The report criticized the technocratic approach to development under the ‘Green Revolution’ which was more concerned with productivity and less about social imperatives. In word the MHA accepted the legitimacy of the concerns coming from the poor peasants who formed the base for the Naxalite movement, however the ministry had no power to curb the violent repression unleashed by police forces and state apparatuses at the time (Subramanian 2007:135). Banerjee quotes that:

“Although the peasant political organizations in most parts of the country are still organizationally weak and their capacity for launching sustained agitations is limited, the tensions in the rural areas, resulting from the widening gap between the relatively

few affluent farmers and the large body of small landholders, landless and agricultural workers, may increase in the coming months and years” (Banerjee 2008).

On the 14th of March 2006, the Home Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh said that the “Naxalites are the single largest national security threat in India” (News 2007). In the current report from the MHA the Naxalite movement is recognized as a terrorist organization (MHA). Although there is an admittance of failed implementation of governance and appropriate reforms to eliminate the socio-economic deprivation causing many to join and sympathize, the actions remain policy oriented in the sense that draconian laws are used to arrest and punish people perceived to be engaging in Naxalite activities. The change in framing the movement as a legitimate peasant based rebellion against socio-economic deprivation towards a ‘terrorist’ discourse, is also evident in the narratives of informants. One informant said that:

“now people can not feel heroic like before when joined. When I was a member I felt proud to call myself Naxalite. It meant that there was hope in a dark society” (Revati 2008:[telephone interview B]).

Another excerpt illustrates the current framing:

“The armed struggle is now being described as a terrorist movement. This has strong impact on people’s minds. The state is treating them as terrorists. Earlier you could be proud to call yourself a revolutionary. Today you are a terrorist” (Rajesh 2008:[telephone interview]).

The current group of informants that chose not to join may have had a different perception of what it means to be a Naxalite and what implications it may have to join, that informants who joined in the 1980s and 1990s.

6.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

6.1 About the Findings

The intention of this study is to explore how actors framed their motivations for joining, leaving and refraining from membership in a social movement. To interpret how informants framed their experiences with Naxalite groups, I synthesized a variety of theories on social movements, frame alignment processes, political opportunity structures, repressive responses, networks, ideologies and identity. These theories form a framework, various parts of

which are useful for the interpretation of how cultural values, identity backgrounds and political opportunity structures influence actors' experiences over time.

According to informants' narratives, I found that the framing of being a Naxalite today is quite different from what it was three decades ago. In the earlier stages it was common to associate being a Naxalite with being someone 'heroic', whereas today it is associated with being a 'terrorist'. This change was reflected in informants' narratives and may have influenced their decision to join, leave or refrain from membership.

The way in which informants frame their experiences of joining is contingent on the manner in which they were first approached to join the movement, their socio-cultural background and the degree of resonance between the interpretive frame offered by the movement and actors' preferences and concrete life situations at the time. Despite high levels of repression, informants in the 1980s and 1990s still chose to join. The reasons were dependent on frame resonance and a coherent interpretation of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing between informants and the social movement. Informants who opted to refrain from membership, despite having co-existed with Naxalite groups and having an interpretive frame readily available, offered an interesting comparison to the informants who had been part of the movement. Their interpretation of Naxalism was more centred on the risk of becoming one. Their narratives must be understood in the current context of civil war in Chhattisgarh. As the war escalated, a gradual shift in the activities of the Naxalite movement from an activist rebellion heavily oriented on ideology, towards more opportunistic features may have influenced the decision to refrain from membership. There is also an aspect of violence related to this. The implications of this violence were interpreted differently in the current situation. The reason why these tribal people did not join generates another one: why did they not turn to Naxalites for protection against abuses of the anti-Naxalite insurgency, given that they had co-existed with Naxalites over

several decades? To find the answer to this question requires more in-depth fieldwork.

6.2 Positive Implications

Given that the approach of this research is exploratory in nature, the intention is not to generate absolute answers to the research question, but offer some in-depth interpretations from a select sample of individuals. Analytical approaches to actors' interpretations of Naxalism and micro-level processes are largely absent in the vast literature on the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh. In this sense the study is meant to be a contribution and an inspiration to pursue further analytical studies on this particular movement, with individual perspectives as a central focus.

6.2.1 Theoretical Contribution

Further research on individuals' interpretations of collective action frames is needed. Research focusing on actor's perspectives on joining, leaving and refraining from membership in a particular social movement will also generate generalizations from which new theories for understanding such motivations can be developed. In this study, I had to synthesize a range of theories to interpret informants' narratives in the various time periods from which they drew their experiences. I also had to include theories that accounted for the way in which political opportunity structures, such as repression and competition for support influenced decisions to join, leave or stay out. More importantly, concepts for understanding the influence of cultural values, ideology, identity and networks had to be applied to interpret actors' experiences in an adequate manner. As such, I hope the theoretical framework that has been used in this thesis will serve as contribution to further studies on how people frame their experiences of joining, leaving and choosing not to join in a particular social movement under specific circumstances.

6.2.2 Empirical Contribution

The narratives of informants show that they did not have the same interpretations of issues and events as the leadership of a Naxalite group had. The narratives also indicated changes in perceptions over time, but what triggered those changes varied across identity background and was influenced by external events. The experiences of the actors also reflect that under certain circumstances social movements are successful in negotiating and sustaining frames, and under others they are not. The study reveals that how informants interpret these changes may differ from that of the leadership.

More research is needed on the significance of framing in mobilizing potential constituents of social movements. This research needs to focus on the individual's interpretation of these frames. This study has been an attempt to do so in relation to one particular type of movement. People may join a social movement for various reasons. In order to capture the significance of frames and why people remain in a movement, it is important to include a processual and long-term perspective, which the time span of my informants' experiences has attempted to convey. It is through the capacity to negotiate and redefine frames over time that social movements retain members.

6.3 Future Research

Several possible topics for future research have surfaced during this study. One of which is the dichotomy between caste and class ideology in the Naxalite movement. I merely scratch the surface of informants' interpretations of what it means to be a Dalit in the class ideology. Or, how the experience in the movement and the familiarization of Marxist ideology functions as a stepping stone towards adopting an Ambedkar master frame, in which informants see caste oppression, and not class oppression, as the fundamental problem in Indian society. As an extension of this, it could be interesting to examine if practices related to the Hindu notion of purity and pollution are prevalent in the movement, and if so, in what way certain events influence the changes in perception of having a caste background or adopting a class identity. Another interesting aspect, which also relates to the adoption of a class identity, is the

co-existence of that identity with those of gender, tribal and lower caste identities. Furthermore, how these are construed and forged in relation to one another through the interaction between members over time and subsequently how it influences people's self-perceptions would be an interesting topic to pursue. This highlights the aspect of building unity between cadres and can say something about how the Naxalite movement is able to create this unity or in some cases fails to do so.

As an extension on role of identity, gender is one that deserves greater attention. Naxalite groups have since the end of the 1990s recruited an extensive number of women. I would be interested to explore why women continue to join, and relate this to their other identities as for example Dalits, OBC or tribal women, and if, or how membership in the movement alters their self-perception. In this regard it would be interesting to look at what role the women play in the movement, and if the internal structures have been altered due to the inclusion of more women. Is it the case that the increased inclusion of women in the groups' armed wings changes the type of violence that is used? And if so, in what way? Does the movement become more selective in the use of violence, regress to a state of activist rebellion or does it continue to develop towards opportunism, yet with a strong ideological orientation?

The above illustrates that the exploratory approach generated new topics of research in the area of social movements and actor's interpretation of collective action frames. The theoretical framework developed here can be a starting point for further research on Naxalism in India, or in similar contexts elsewhere, which focuses on micro-level processes and aims to explore how people frame their experiences of joining, leaving or refraining from membership in a social movement.

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APPENDIX

1. GLOSSARY

Caste Terminologies

Brahmin – *The highest rank in the Varna System*

Dalit – *From Sanskrit, meaning 'downtrodden' or 'broken people'*

Harijan – *Term for Dalit used by Gandhi*

Kamma – *Dominant peasant caste in Andhra Pradesh*

Kshatriya – *Second of the four Varnas*

OBC - *Other Backward Castes (Legal term)*

Reddy – *Dominant Peasant Caste in Andhra Pradesh*

SC- *Scheduled Castes (Legal Term)*

Sena – *Another word for army. Used when referring to armies made up of higher castes*

Shudra – *Lowest of the four Varnas*

Untouchable – *'Unclean' or 'polluted', a Hindu religious term*

Untouchability – *The practice of discriminating someone who is a Dalit*

Vaishya – *Third of the four Varnas*

Varna System – *A four layer caste system composed of Jatis: organized according to Hindu rituals of purity and Pollution. The four castes are: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras*

Velama – *Dominant Caste*

Vetti – *Bonded Labour*

Begari – *Bonded labour*

Tribal Terminology

Adivasis – *Another word for tribal, meaning 'original inhabitant'*

Gotti Koya – *Telugu name for Dorla*

Kisan – *Farmer*

Koya – *Telugu name for Muria*

Madiga – *Term for Dalit - scavenger*

Mazdoor – *Worker*

Patel – *Village Headman*

ST- *Scheduled Tribes (Legal Term)*

Tendu – *Leaf used for local cigarettes*

Zilla - *District*

Naxalite and Police Terminology

Abhiyan - *Campaign*

CPI (M) – *Communist Party of India (Maoist)*

CPI (ML) – *Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)*

CPI (ML) Janashakti - *Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's Power (Jana= People, Shakti=Power)*

CPI (ML) PW - *Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War*

Dalam – *Armed Squad of Naxalite groups*

Gram Panchayat – *Village level Councils of elected government representatives*

Jan Andalats – *People's Court organized by Naxalites*

NDR – *New Democratic Revolution*

LGS – *Local Guerrilla Squad*

PDSU – *Progressive Democratic Student Union*

PLGA – *People's Liberation Guerrilla Army, standing army of CPI (M)*

PR – *Party Representative*

TDP – *Telugu Desam Party*

Sangam – *Village level Naxalite association*

Government Terminology

MHA – *Ministry of Home Affairs*

BSF – *Border Security Force*

CRPF – *Central Reserve Police Force*

INC – *Indian National Congress*

NTR – *N. T. Rama Rao, the first general secretary of TDP*

General Acronyms

ACHR – *Asian Centre for Human Rights*

CGNET – Chhattisgarh Net

CPJC – Campaign for Peace and Justice in Chhattisgarh

HRF – Human Rights Forum

HRW – Human Rights Watch

NHRC – National Human Rights Commission

PUCL – People’s Union for Civil Liberties

SATP – South Asian Terrorism Portal

2. INTERVIEW GUIDES

1.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EX-MEMBERS

Joining

Background: Family, studies, work, village or urban area?

When did you first hear about the movement? How did this happen?

What was your impression of the movement?

What did they tell you when you met them for the first time?

When did you join?

What made you join?

What did you do in the movement? What were your responsibilities?

What was your relation to other members, leaders?

What were your responsibilities when you were in the movement?

What was your relationship to tribals?

What was the relationship between women and men?

Were there Dalit or tribal leaders?

What was your life like in the movement?

Leaving

When did you leave?

Why did you leave?

Can you tell me a bit about what happened at the time you left?

Did other people leave at the same time?

When did you first think about leaving?

How did you survive when you left the movement?

How did the movement react to this?

Retrospect

Have you gained anything from the movement?

What do you think about the movement now?

What has the movement meant to you, personally?

Do you think such a movement is necessary in India today?

Which impact do you think the Naxalite movement has had on the Dalit/caste cause in general?

Do you think everyone should become a Maoist/Naxalite?

Is there any difference between the police and the Salwa Judum?

Do you think the government can solve this conflict?

What is your experience with police?

How did the party react when you left?

Do you think Naxalite movements are necessary?

Is armed struggle necessary?

Do you miss the party?

Would you join again?

How is your life like now?

1.2 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TRIBALS REFRAINING FROM MEMBERSHIP

Background: Family, work, village or urban area?

Why have you come here?

Do you know what the conflict is about?

How was your life before the conflict?

How is your life now?

When did you first hear about the movement? How did this happen?

What was your impression of the movement? What did they say?

Why have you not joined the Maoists?

Why have you not joined the Salwa Judum?

Is there any difference between the police and the Salwa Judum?

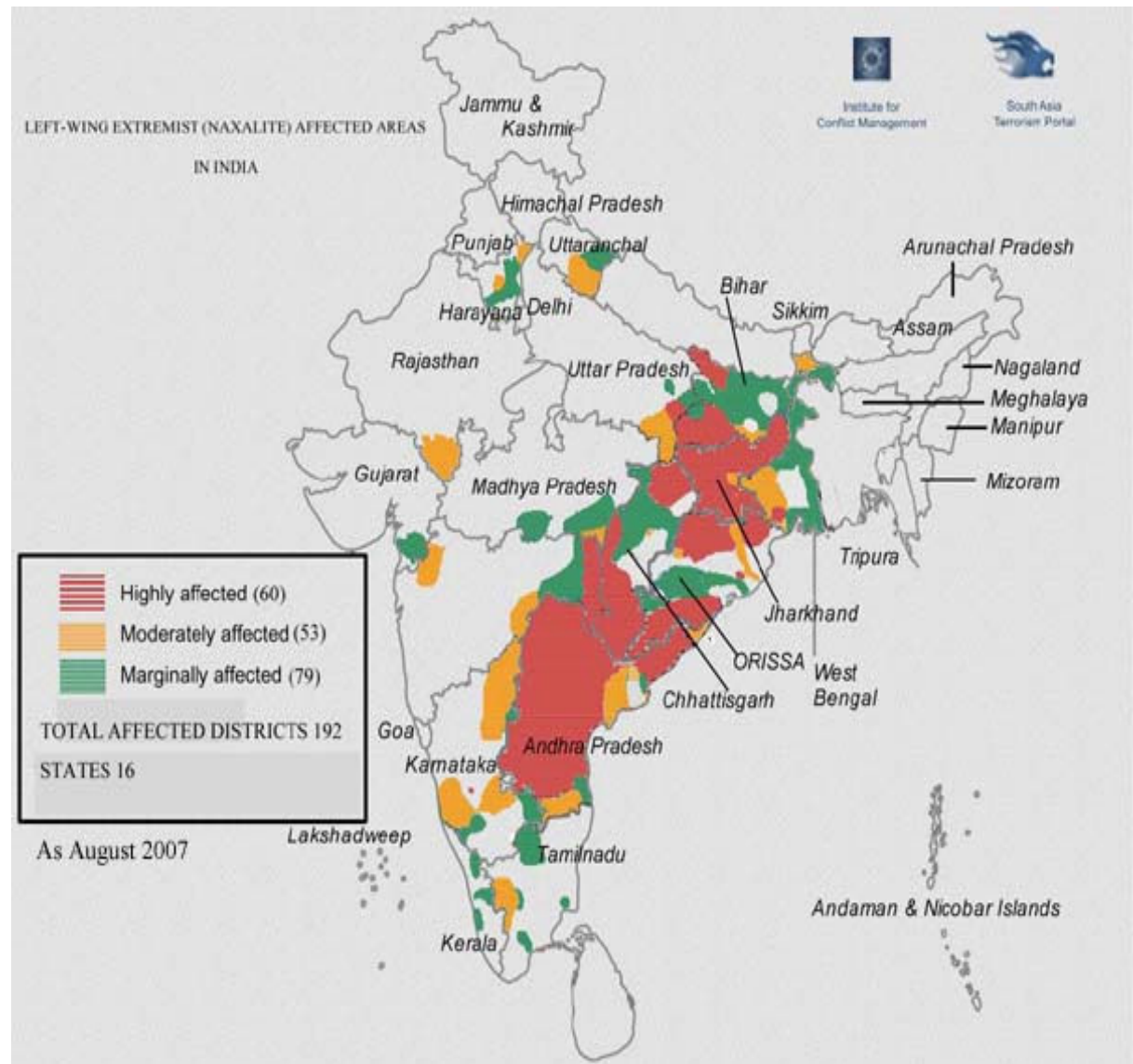
What is your experience with police?

Do you think the government can solve this conflict?

What do you think will happen after this?

3. MAPS: COUNTRY AND STATE

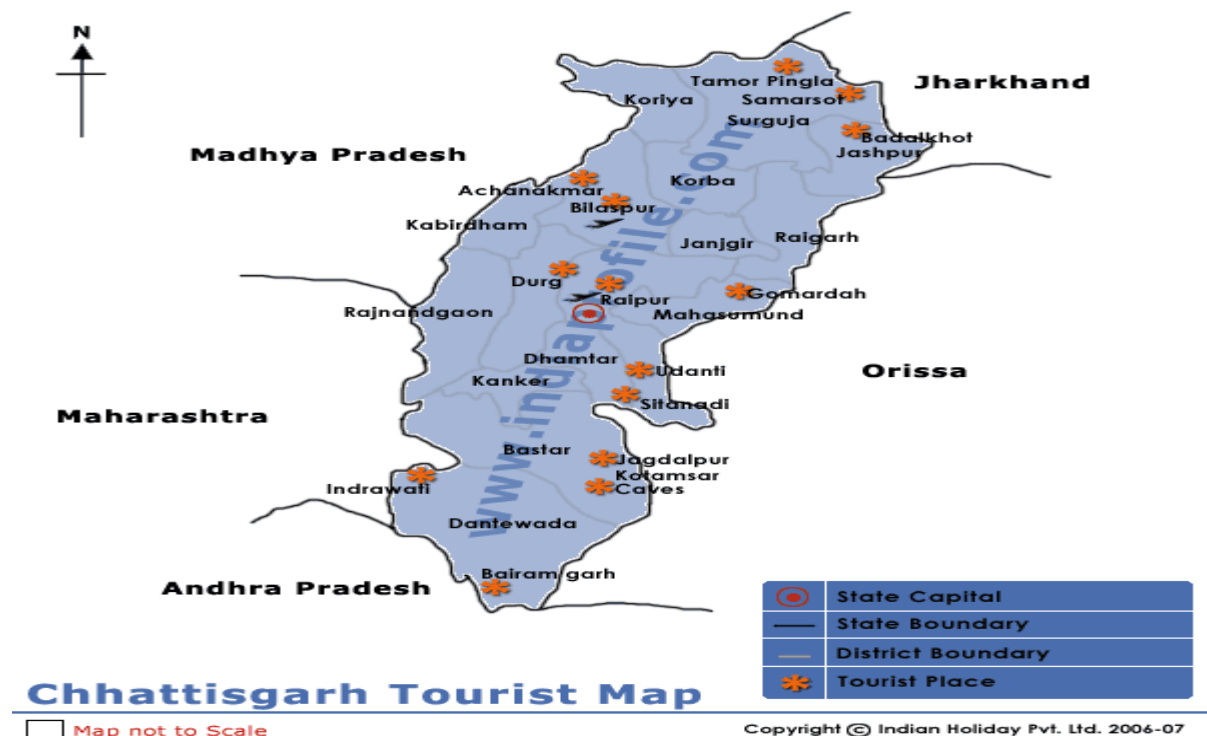
3.1 SPREAD OF NAXALISM IN INDIA



3.2 STATE MAPS OF ANDHRA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH



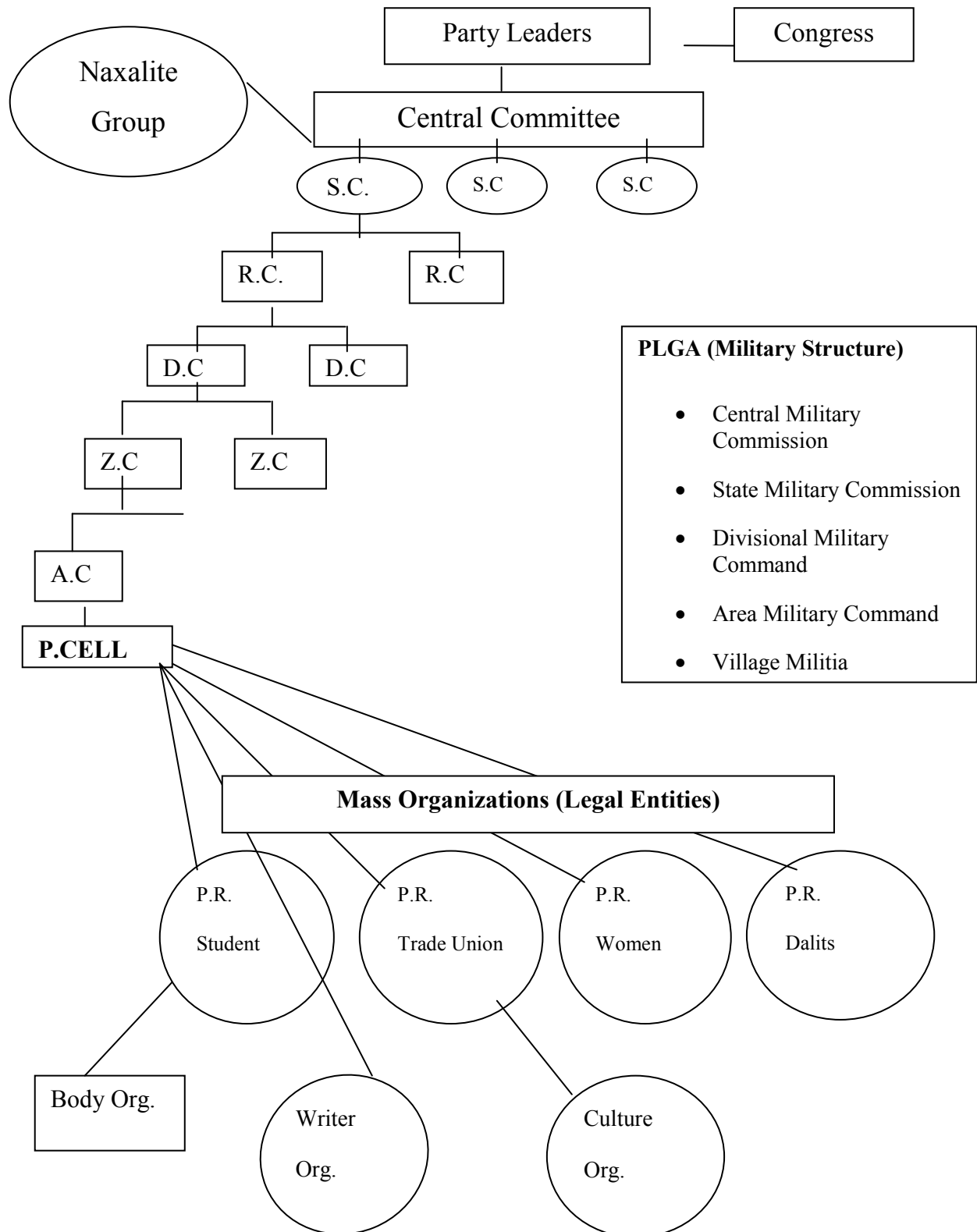
Warangal and Khammam are in the northern part and borders Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh.



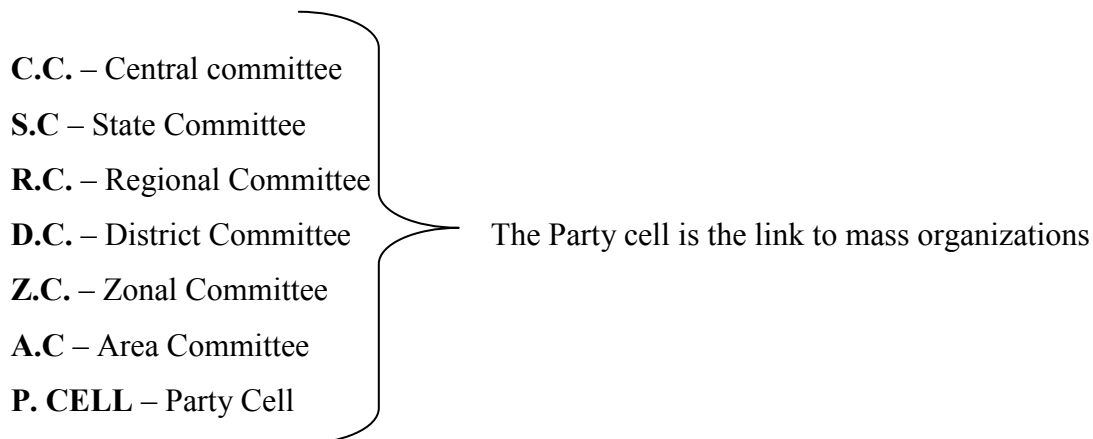
Dantewada is in the southern part and border Warangal and Khammam in Andhra Pradesh.

4. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Naxalite Movement (Political Structure)



ORGANISATIONAL MAP - Explanations



P.R. – Party Representative is a party member in all legal committees.

PARTY CELL- It is the basic unit of the party. Can be formed area wise or profession wise. P.C. is the nucleus of day-to-day activity. There are between 3-5 members in this unit. Members of this cell are full-fledged party members and will fulfil their duties as such. Party cells may be formed in factories and mass organizations in the area it is established. The P.C. is:

“.....the living link between broad masses of an area and the party. The cell will lead the revolutionary war of broad masses of people with full initiative. It will educate the masses to function secretly, illegally and according to the strategy and tactics of the Protracted People’s war”(Maoist) 2004 (Sept 21)).

PLGA – People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army is the instrument for the Communist Party of India (Maoist) in overthrowing the Indian state and enhancing the armed struggle in establishing a new democratic state. It is a political and military force separated from the mass organizations of the CPI (M) movement. It is under the control of the Central Committee in the Political leadership structure (PGLA).

This information is drawn from a combination of drawings and narratives from informants, an article in The Sunday Indian¹⁰⁸ and the Party Constitution of the CPI (M) published on the South Asian Terrorism Portal. Not all Naxalite factions rely heavily on guerrilla warfare and seek to focus on mass mobilization in mainstream politics. Thus internal structures may look different for those types of Naxalite movements, slanting more towards either the political or military organization.

¹⁰⁸ Basak, S. (2008) "Guerrillas of the Mist", The Sunday Indian